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SPECIAL ISSUE ON MID-TERM REVIEW OF UN NEW AGENDA FOR AFRICA

Africa and donors agree to intensify their efforts for the continent's development

By Margaret A. Novicki

After five days of tough negotiations over the mid-term results of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) and over future priorities, Africa and its international partners reached agreement at 2 am on 21 September on recommendations to guide the continent's development efforts for the rest of the decade.

The proposed measures include deeper debt reduction, increased resource flows, trade facilitation and market access, commodity diversification and capacity-building. Delegates also recommitted themselves to the political compact contained in UN-NADAF, which was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1991. Developed countries pledged to continue supporting Africa's efforts, while African countries reaffirmed their primary responsibility for their own development and their commitment to fundamental economic and political reforms.

Whereas UN-NADAF is essentially a statement of principles, the Mid-term Review, conducted by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly from 16-21 Sept-



UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Ambassador Hisashi Owada, Permanent Representative of Japan to the UN and Chairman of the Mid-term Review, at the Review's opening session at UN headquarters.

ember, shifted the emphasis towards implementation, building on what several delegates described as a new development consensus on Africa. This new consensus — to address Africa's critical social and economic problems in an integrated manner through an internation-

al partnership, with the continent taking "ownership" — has been taking shape over the past few years through the series of global UN conferences and other forums in which Africa's needs have been specially spotlighted.

While the emphasis during past exercises was "on lamentations on Africa's poverty and marginalization," said Cameroon's Ambassador Paul Bamele Engo, spokesman for Organization of African Unity (OAU) member states and one of the chief negotiators for the African Group of delegations, deliberations during the Review were more pragmatic and better targeted.

First, delegates evaluated in detail Africa's political and economic progress since 1991. Then they negotiated specific recommendations and follow-up mechanisms to ensure the New Agenda's implementation

over the rest of the 1990s.

"We sat down and in five days, starting with blank sheets of paper, we came up with a docu-

'Dynamic partnership' critical for Africa

Secretary-General's report seeks stronger commitments

Africa has made significant progress in key sectors over the past five years, but it needs greater commitment at both the African and international levels to consolidate these gains, says UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In his mid-term report on the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), the Secretary-General argues that for Africa's efforts to succeed within the time frame of the Agenda, the international community should provide "adequate and assured resource flows" as well as "an

enabling external environment."

A deeper commitment to a "dynamic partnership" between Africa and the international community is critical to the realization of the continent's potential over the coming years, says the Secretary-General. The international community must improve the "level, scope and modalities of aid" and take "additional and decisive measures" to resolve Africa's debt crisis. It must also take

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UNICEF / Giacomo Pirozzi



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UNICEF / Cindy Andrew

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Progress reported on Special Initiative

Steering Committee emphasizes African 'ownership' and steps towards implementation

Agency heads and senior officials of the UN family have reported concrete steps towards implementation of the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. At a Steering Committee meeting held on 20 September in New York, they also discussed resource mobilization strategies and the appropriate criteria for moving forward at country level.

With the Mid-term Review of the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) struggling towards a conclusion that same day, the Steering Committee emphasized the Initiative's aim to "operationalize" and not replace UN-NADAF, a concern expressed by some delegations in the Review. Clarifying this relationship would improve understanding in Africa and the international community and facilitate implementation, said Mr. James Gustave Speth, Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), who co-chairs the Steering Committee with Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The Special Initiative was launched on 15 March 1996, as a programme of concrete actions to accelerate African development over the next 10 years.

Greater inter-agency cooperation and consultation featured in the reports on water (by the UN Environment Programme), food security (Food and Agriculture Organization), and governance (UNDP). Participants also noted the need for a better division of labour, particularly in technical cooperation programmes, during the ECA-led discussion on harnessing information technology for development, as well as the segment on trade and investment led by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

A need for national commitment

Steady progress also was reported by UNESCO, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank on education and health, to which most of the Initiative's resources will be devoted. African education ministers will meet in early November in Geneva to decide on implementation structures, further reinforcing African "ownership."

Supporting this point, the World Bank

Improving access to water is one of the priorities of the Special Initiative.



UNICEF / Maggie Mwangi-Lee

observed that there would be no implementation without national commitment. The Bank then raised the issue of moving forward with the Initiative at country level as soon as possible and recommended a focus on countries well advanced in preparing their sector investment programmes.

Participants agreed that the Initiative should show early and visible results, but differed over the selection criteria and the definition of results. Some warned that no country should feel left out, regardless of its state of readiness for implementing sector programmes. Selectivity was fine for countries "in the fast lane," but what about "slow-lane countries" eager to join in, asked one participant, noting that inter-country and regional activities also required resources.

WHO and the World Bank reported on successful meetings with African ministers on health sector reform. Implementation strategies had been finalized and circulated to African Heads of State and to the international community. Performance criteria had been agreed and the programmes endorsed by African health ministers.

With readiness to implement the Initiative figuring among these criteria, the World Bank conceded that some countries would even need help to begin to be ready. Immunization programmes are an example of priority activities for all countries, UNICEF observed, and participants agreed that countries needing help in planning health sector programmes should not

be excluded from the Initiative. The Steering Committee recognized that some countries were well advanced in the preparation of their sectoral investment programmes and were virtually ready for implementation, but also acknowledged the virtues of paying attention to the "weakest links" in a chain.

Resources and ownership

But with Committee members emphasizing either inclusiveness or the need for a quick start, the Initiative Secretariat was finally asked to consult further, through an ad hoc group, on acceptable criteria, bearing in mind the varying stages of country readiness and the need for transparency in the process of identification and selection.

On resource mobilization, the World Bank and UNDP encouraged coordinating agencies to identify outstanding needs — such as funding for inter-country and regional activities — and to work on arrangements within their groups. Participants agreed that resources would be mobilized and "ownership" demonstrated most effectively at country level, hence the need for early progress on sector strategies and funding at the Consultative Group and Round Table meetings organized respectively by the World Bank and UNDP. The Bank said that the next meeting of the Special Programme of Assistance (SPA) for Africa would include discussion of sector investment programmes as related to implementation of the Special Initiative. ■

Mid-term Review

from page 1

ment, an updated consensus on African development...There are other negotiations that take years and years and don't reach that same outcome," one developed country negotiator told *Africa Recovery*.

Despite frequently heated disagreements between developed countries — represented mainly by the US and the European Union (EU) — and the African Group over substance and wording, agreement was finally reached on a carefully crafted, 26-page final document which will be presented to the General Assembly for adoption before the end of the year.

The African Group exhibited "tremendous leadership" in assuring a successful outcome to the meeting, said a US negotiator. "They knew what their objectives were and were there to come to a good agreement," she said. To augment the information provided in Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's report on UN-NADAF implementation, which formed the basis for the Review (see page 1), the Group came armed with two documents of its own: an OAU assessment of UN-NADAF and a "non-paper" of proposals for further action, some of which were incorporated in the final document.

Focus on implementation

"Africa is not poor because of lack of development agendas," said Ambassador Engo, reflecting the directness with which Africa argued its case. The continent does not want to "eternally depend on the support of the international community," he said, but rather is seeking an improved global climate — "a less hostile environment for trade and more open markets for its goods" and "additional relief of its debt."

"The greatest effort ahead of us," he noted at the end of the negotiations, is to ensure the success of UN-NADAF. "It is no longer enough to congratulate ourselves for producing wonderful documents," he declared.

Ambassador Hisashi Owada of Japan, who chaired the Ad Hoc Committee, agreed that the meeting "succeeded in establishing a framework of a new strategy for development on the basis of global partnership and the concept of ownership." This achievement, he told *Africa Recovery*, should be contrasted with the past, when African development issues were "taken hostage" by the East-West confrontation and were "not squarely dealt with."

Clearly, "progress has been made in all areas

Africa's efforts need more donor support

Africa remains the weakest link in the chain of world development, said Nigeria's Deputy Ambassador Isaac Ayewah, a chief negotiator for the African Group during the Mid-term Review. "The international community must therefore see complementarity in fully supporting African efforts towards economic recovery" because if there is a weakness in one area, "the machinery cannot function to full capacity."

Interviewed by *Africa Recovery* after the week of tense negotiations, Ambassador Ayewah said that while Africa accepted primary responsibility for its own development, the international community should continue to demonstrate its support for a continent challenged by "the vagaries of the external market, the unpredictability of economic returns on its commodities and a persistent debt burden."

"The international community tells us that a whole lot has been achieved in the past five years, but we do not see the impact on the living conditions and economic viability of the people." The international community's reluctance to implement the Agenda, he argued, is linked to donor fatigue and to the sense that Africa has "a plethora of problems that they are not happy to deal with."

While crediting those donors that had made efforts to assist Africa, he regretted that costly efforts made by many African countries to implement agreed reforms had not produced the required level of international support. Even the ODA target of 0.7 per cent of

GNP became subject to debate during the Review because some donors "were not willing to accept the target as having binding implications on them."



Nigerian Deputy Ambassador
Isaac Ayewah

Ambassador Ayewah said that the creditors' insistence on a case-by-case, instead of a global, approach to debt was also unfortunate. "Expedient as a case-by-case approach may be in the short term, it is not useful as a long-term solution." An international conference on debt, on the other hand, would "dramatize the problem" and provide a platform for "concrete

political commitments" towards a lasting solution, he maintained.

With Africa's access to external markets constrained by the lack of diversification and non-competitiveness of its exports, and given the lack of resources to add value to its products, Ambassador Ayewah argued that the donor countries' demand for African exports to be competitive was like "giving a dog a bad name in order to hang it." Africa's continuing efforts to diversify away from a chronic dependence on primary products through the establishment of a diversification facility had not received much support from developed countries, he said. While agreeing that the Mid-term Review final document was a fair representation of positions, Ambassador Ayewah maintained that the international community should continue to assist Africa "by incremental steps, born out of good will, shared responsibility and friendly contact."

— Ahunna Eziakonwa

that we reviewed," Ambassador Owada said. As a "stepping stone for the future," the Review should lead to concrete action to consolidate the progress that Africa has already made, he said, echoing the focus on UN-NADAF implementation which was a recurring theme of the Mid-term Review.

Both Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's report and his opening statement to the plenary session on 16 September paid tribute to the difficult reforms African countries had undertaken over the first five years of UN-NADAF. These reforms resulted in improved economic performance at an aggregate level and liberalization of political systems.

But the challenges before the continent remain numerous, the Secretary-General noted. Among them, a consistent decline in per capita income resulting in increasing poverty; finan-

cial constraints from stagnating or declining official development assistance (ODA), deteriorating terms of trade, and mounting external indebtedness; and the economic globalization which threatens to further marginalize Africa.

"They are also challenges which the international community must face," said Mr. Boutros-Ghali. Ambassador Owada concurred: "In the international environment of the post-Cold War world, the development of Africa is one of the most pressing issues facing the international community." If African countries can attain a "take-off" through economic development, he stressed, there will be "an enormously beneficial effect on the rest of the world" with "a full-fledged integration of African economies into the international system."

African delegates also emphasized this point, with Nigerian Deputy Ambassador Isaac

Ayewah, one of the African Group's chief negotiators, arguing that the Mid-term Review should not be carried out in the "donor-recipient" mode which implies that developed countries "are only giving so much to Africa out of their good will." Rather, "Africa wants to be able to be partners in progress and in economic development," he declared.

Despite sharp disagreements over the key issues of resource flows, debt reduction and trade facilitation, delegates reached fairly rapid consensus on an assessment of Africa's performance since 1991, and on the areas for priority attention during the rest of the decade. These negotiations took place in Working Group I, which was chaired by Ambassador Samuel Insanally of Guyana. He noted that the task was "not to apportion blame," but to determine what issues needed increased attention to accelerate UN-NADAF's implementation.

It was no small achievement, said a US delegate, that "real progress" had been made by Africa towards attaining the objectives of UN-NADAF. In 1995, a dozen African countries achieved the target of 6 per cent annual growth in gross domestic product (see box, page 10), and the number of countries suffering negative growth rates dropped from 19 in 1992 to four. In addition, the majority of countries have democratized their political systems. But more needs to be done to deepen these reforms and continue the positive momentum, delegates concurred.

Agreed priorities

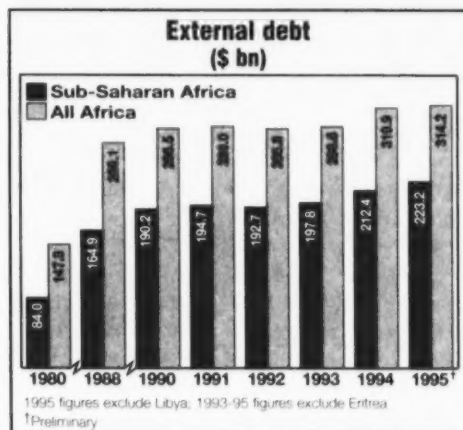
The agreed priorities for the continent to address "in an integrated manner" include:

- Economic reforms, including the effective mobilization and efficient utilization of domestic resources;
- Promotion of the private sector and foreign direct investment;
- Intensification of the democratization process and the strengthening of civil society;
- Strengthening the link between the environment and development, with urgent measures to address poverty, and the problems of drought and desertification;
- Promotion of agriculture, rural development and food security, with a special emphasis on access

to skills, technology and training for women, the main food producers;

- Focus on the human dimension, including expanding access to basic education and primary health care, capacity-building and human resource development;
- Fostering of regional cooperation and integration;
- Strengthening of South-South cooperation, including triangular arrangements involving the UN system and international financial institutions.

While the deliberations of Working Group I proceeded relatively smoothly, those of Group II on the international community's responsibilities and commitments, chaired by Ambassador Alex Reyn of Belgium, were contentious enough to leave any final agreement in doubt until well past the eleventh hour. OAU Assistant Secretary-General Vijay S. Makhani said this was perhaps due to Africa's perception of growing insensitivity in the "fast-



Source: UN Africa Recovery from World Bank, World Debt Tables, 1996

changing world" to the situation of "those of us in the poorer segment of world society." This, he said, had "an immense impact on the implementation of UN-NADAF."

Controversy over resource flows

African delegates appeared convinced that the developed countries' implementation of the

US sees concrete achievements from New Agenda

Despite some heated disagreements between US negotiators and the African Group on resource flows, debt and trade facilitation, the US Representative on the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Victor Marrero, had an upbeat assessment of the Mid-term Review. He told *Africa Recovery* it had not been "as confrontational, as divisive as some people thought it might be." The African delegations made "reasonable and realistic" requests and proposals, while the donor community recognized the "seriousness of the problems" in Africa and expressed "a willingness to cooperate."

Ambassador Marrero pointed to debt and trade not as sticking points in the negotiations, but as examples of concrete achievement over the first five years of UN-NADAF. "If you look at the General Assembly resolutions on debt over the past three years," he said, "you will see how much...progress has been made in acceptance of the need for more action." He cited the World Bank-IMF initiative on debt, as well as the G-7's recent acknowledgement of the importance of further debt relief for the least developed countries as "very, very significant." These moves demonstrate that the developed world has recognized the impact of these problems on African development and accepted that "we must do more and cooperate more with the African countries to support their efforts," he said.

Another example of this spirit of cooperation, Ambassador Marrero said, is the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, launched in March 1996. While acknowledging that the Initiative evoked "mixed views," the US Ambassador said its significance should not be seen in terms of the level of resources or where they came from, but rather in the "special recognition of the problems of Africa as warranting attention from the international community." The singling out of Africa as "a major priority" towards which resources "from other elements and other parts of the system" should be rechanneled is the most important aspect, he said.

Official development assistance, however, should not be seen as "a kind of universal cure-all" for Africa, he stressed. He cited the example of Latin America to demonstrate that the best route out of aid dependency is to create "open and free markets and democracy and good governance" — a conducive climate for foreign investment. "More and more countries in Africa are realizing that," he said, and their experiences have been "as positive as what has happened in Latin America and Asia."

Ambassador Marrero said that the final document of the Mid-term Review "speaks for itself" in that it is "almost a composite" of a series of decisions on African development that have been taken over the last five years in other global forums. This, he stressed, has been "an evolution."

— M.A.N.



US Ambassador Victor Marrero

Agenda had been "hesitant and born out of donor fatigue," said Nigeria's Ambassador Ayewah. While African governments had undertaken "painful reforms," they stressed, donors had not fulfilled their part of UN-NADAF, with resource flows as one example. (The expression — "painful" economic reforms — caused debate and was cut from the final document.) UN-NADAF cites the Secretary-General's call for a minimum \$30 bn in net ODA to Africa in 1992, followed by a 4 per cent real annual increase, but this had not been met, said the African Group.

In addition to disagreement over the source of figures which showed global ODA to be declining, delegates clashed over the 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA target in the UN-NADAF document. The US disagreed with a characterization of ODA flows to Africa as "paltry," noted it had never agreed to "superficial" targets for ODA, and placed its formal reservation on this point in the final document. The EU, however, was "committed to strive to fulfil the 0.7 per cent," said its chief negotiator, Ms. Helen Browne of Ireland, noting that some EU countries had exceeded the target.

The final compromise stated that "mobilization of substantial new resources from all sources, public and private, and from traditional and new resources is essential" and that developed countries "should strive to fulfil, as soon as possible, their commitment to attain the 0.7 per cent target."

African delegates, however, privately acknowledged that despite the tenacity of their arguments for increased ODA, they had accepted that stagnating or declining flows were the trend of the future. But they said there should be more emphasis on making gains through debt relief and trade facilitation, as well as through increased investment.

They also described donor country efforts to introduce "conditionality" into the discussion on resource flows as a bit heavy-handed. Ambassador Owada explained that some delegations believed "it is not simply a question of resource flows, but how best and how effectively the resource flow is going to be utilized, and therefore the question of good governance, human rights...becomes very important." A negotiator from Japan noted that his country needed "success stories" in Africa in order to

persuade its tax-payers to be more generous.

Delegates agreed on the importance of increasing foreign direct investment "to supplement the availability of resources" for economic development, but it was also necessary to create a conducive investment climate through

"No country in the world today can afford isolationism. All we are saying is if we are able to develop, to use our resources with the cooperation of our partners, if we have a fair entry into international trade, we will not need aid from anybody, we can look after ourselves."

— Ambassador Paul Bamela Engo
Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the UN



improvements in the macroeconomic environment, public administration, rule of law, infrastructure and entrepreneurial and institutional capabilities. Still, donor countries were urged to be supportive by encouraging venture capital initiatives, institution-building and human resource development.

New measures on debt and trade

The second major area of controversy was a solution to Africa's strangling external debt. Lines were drawn early in the debate, with the African Group reiterating a proposal for an international conference to address the problem of external indebtedness, and donor countries re-emphasizing the case-by-case approach to debt.

by the EU that showed 22 African countries as having received Naples Terms on debt relief. In the final document, the wording was toned down from "considerable" to "meaningful" debt alleviation measures, and "some" African countries replaced the EU claim of 22.

Mindful of the then-imminent Annual Meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington in late September where finalization of the new debt initiative was expected — as well as the fact that the Review could not be a forum for debt negotiation but only encourage steps being taken

— the final document called on:

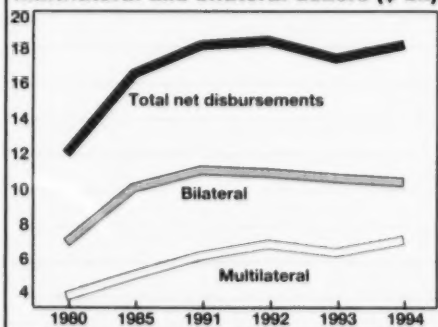
- multilateral financial institutions (MFIs) to continue their efforts to address the debt problems of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries and for a favourable outcome of the World Bank-IMF draft Framework for Action on multilateral debt;
- Paris Club and other bilateral creditors to go beyond the Naples Terms on a case-by-case basis for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries; and
- creditor countries, private banks and MFIs to address the commercial debt problems of African least developed countries.

US Ambassador Victor Marrero noted there has been "a vast amount of progress" in acceptance of the need "for more action" to respond to the problems of debt "from where we were when [UN-NADAF] began five years ago." This year, for the first time, he noted, the World Bank and IMF came forward with proposals for a multilateral debt relief fund — "something that wasn't even on the table a year ago" — and for the Paris Club to extend Naples Terms relief on official bilateral debt.

Acknowledging that these measures were "a good step," Ambassador Ayewah of Nigeria nonetheless insisted the issue of an international conference was "still valid" to dramatize Africa's debt problem to the rest of the world and to gain a "political commitment" to address the issue "on a long-term basis" that will be "meaningful" for debtor countries.

With Africa's share of world trade at less than 3 per cent during the first five years of UN-NADAF, with its continued reliance on a few primary commodities for the bulk of its export earnings, and with the prospect of "transitional costs" due to the Uruguay Round

Net ODA to sub-Saharan Africa from multilateral and bilateral donors (\$ bn)



Source: UN Africa Recovery from OECD data

The US and EU were adamant in stressing that "considerable" debt alleviation measures had already been undertaken, including cancellation of bilateral debt and increased concessionality. African representatives remained unconvinced, questioning statistics presented

trade agreement, the Review acknowledged that the issues of trade facilitation, market access and diversification were key to Africa's future.

But donor country delegates disagreed with a long-standing commitment, supported by the African Group, to the establishment of a diversification facility in the African Development Fund (ADF) of the African Development Bank (ADB). Still, the final document restated the call for participants in the ADF to consider making "an initial adequate special contribution" to finance the preparatory phase of African commodity diversification programmes. The Common Fund for Commodities was also asked to consider setting up a project formulation facility to help countries design commodity development projects.

The issue of reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers for African exports was also controversial, with some African delegates calling for preferential access for all types of goods from the continent. The EU argued that despite the access given to African goods under the Lomé Convention, Africa's share of trade with Europe

was decreasing. This was due to the lack of competitiveness of Africa's exports and its slow progress in diversification. It is up to Africans "to decide on their priorities," Ms. Browne said. A US negotiator added, "We don't see a solution in developing special access or privileges."

The final document encouraged "more effective utilization of Generalized System of Preferences schemes" for African countries and consideration of further reduction of tariffs and removal of non-tariff barriers for African goods.

Capacity-building a key priority

Delegates were nearly unanimous on the need for further action to support capacity-building in Africa, and the final document said this should remain an essential part of UN operational activities. But the absorptive capacity of African countries, particularly the least devel-

oped, also needs to be strengthened, and a special effort should be made to support social development, especially poverty eradication.

The remaining areas covered in the Mid-term Review were international cooperation and the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in African development. There was some controversy as to the role of the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa —

"not an action of member states," noted an African delegate — vis-à-vis UN-NADAF. Others expressed skepticism about the prominence being given to the Initiative by donors. "We don't know how it will be implemented, how it can be linked [to UN-NADAF], or where the money is coming from," one delegate said.

The final document said that the Special Initiative is "complementary to UN-NADAF" and designed "to facilitate its implementation," but the UN system should focus on coordination and implementation of UN-NADAF and avoid "unnecessary duplication of activities."

And NGOs, who for the first time had a formal consultative status in the Mid-term Review deliberations (see page 8), should have an enhanced role in contributing to the dialogue between governments and all relevant development partners. Finally, delegates called for improvements in the follow-up, monitoring and evaluation machinery of UN-NADAF until the final review and appraisal in 2002.

As Ambassador Owada noted, the Mid-term Review was "a case of whether you look at the glass half filled with water as positive progress or negative lack of progress. Quite clearly, the achievements have not been sufficient in the past five years to bring about a genuine economic take-off." But, he stressed, all the participants endeavoured to see the Review as a "positive step forward."

The essential point, said Ambassador Owada, is that "we can achieve results only if we cooperate and think about the problems as our own, not as the problems of the other side." While Cameroon's Ambassador Engo concurred, he said that "NADAF has spoken very clearly on what the responsibilities are for everyone. The Review has shown that Africa has done a great deal, and is committed to do more for itself to survive. Now we are going to be looking to what the donor community can do."

EU committed to development aid targets

The European Union (EU) maintains a policy commitment to assist Africa with its mounting economic challenges in the 1990s, said Ms. Helen Browne, a First Secretary of the Irish Mission to the UN, and chief negotiator for the EU during the Mid-term Review. The EU has played an active role in UN-NADAF's implementation, said Ms. Browne, in order to "demonstrate our attachment to Africa in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation."



Ms. Helen Browne

Strongly opposed to any bleak assessment of UN-NADAF's first five years, she told *Africa Recovery* that while the EU recognized the need to do more to help Africa sustain its fragile economies, it was only fair to acknowledge the progress made on both sides.

Some African countries had improved governance, created a conducive environment for development and emphasized basic social services such as education, health and the empowerment of women and civil society. For the first time since the 1980s, there was "positive economic growth in Africa." International commitment to support these efforts was also evident in many areas, she argued.

On the contentious issue of external debt, for example, Ms. Browne differed with the African Group's view that international efforts had yet to significantly ease Africa's debt bur-

den. She emphasized that "considerable debt relief measures" had been taken since 1991, with "quite a lot of bilateral debt cancellation and increased concessionality," and that "much more is being done."

Despite US opposition to the 0.7 per cent of GNP target for development aid, Ms. Browne said the EU was committed to it. Some EU members had not only achieved the target, but had also gone beyond it, while others were "striving" to catch up.

On Africa-Europe trade, she regretted that free access to EU markets for all African industrial products and nearly all agricultural products under the Lomé Convention had not increased Africa's share. The EU was already aiding Africa's efforts to diversify through financial and technical cooperation. But African countries need "to decide on their own priorities for programmable aid."

On the outcome of the UN-NADAF review, Ms. Browne said there was "good substance" in the negotiated text, with a focus on implementation, better coordination, and an integrated approach to development. Above all, the atmosphere reflected partnership and good will. "The idea was that we would all work together so as to have movement — and we did," she said.

— Ahunna Eziakonwa

NGOs seek 'made-in-Africa' solutions

Grassroots initiatives highlighted at the Mid-term Review of UN-NADAF

By Ernest Harsch

More African countries may now be experiencing higher economic growth than at the start of the decade, but few of the benefits have reached ordinary people, according to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participating in the 16-21 September Mid-term Review of the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). Many Africans lack food security, conflicts are causing further human misery and high debt-service payments are "diverting resources necessary for basic human needs," a statement issued by African and Northern NGOs declared.

Underlying these and many other problems is a continuing reluctance of African governments and donor institutions to fully involve NGOs and civic organizations in the design and implementation of development programmes, the NGOs maintained. This is despite the ongoing process of democratization on the continent. Moreover, the African Charter for Popular Participation, adopted at an international conference in Arusha in 1990, "has taken a back-seat to the Northern concept of 'good governance'," the NGO statement noted. "This needs to change. It is time for Africa to reclaim its own concept of democracy — a notion founded on people's empowerment and participation."

As Ms. Pauline Biyong of the League for Women and Child Education in Cameroon told a plenary session: "We believe that the vast energies and expertise of African civil society,

Mr. Adel Azzabi,
an NGO representative from
Tunisia, and
Mr. Hassan
Sunmonu,
General
Secretary of the
Organization of
African Trade
Union Unity:
"Trust the
people."



particularly women, have not yet been fully mobilized. We recommend promotion of the effective participation, empowerment and strengthening of civil society organizations in all aspects of development."

Such critical comments were welcomed by a number of government delegations taking part in the Mid-term Review. "Sometimes it is the job of NGOs to be provocative," noted Ms. Joan Burton, Minister of State in Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs. Many of the dozen or so African NGOs participating in the review were able to do so thanks to financing from Ireland and Japan, which also supported production of an NGO report submitted to the Mid-term Review (see box below).

Especially prominent among the NGOs' concerns was the continuing impact of Africa's debt burden, which they characterized as

"unpayable" (see box, next page). In addition, the NGOs charged, the stagnation in official development assistance, the negative short-term impact of international market liberalization, and other global trends are "marginalizing Africa." Meanwhile, they added, "transnational corporations are emerging as the dominant player, threatening to control and determine the pace of development and globalization. Too often, the quest for profit comes at the expense of human rights and the natural environment."

Negative impact of globalization

To realize the goals of UN-NADAF and to combat the negative impact of globalization on Africa, the NGOs urged the adoption of measures that would strengthen the ability of African countries to compete economically, including "access of African products to markets, training in communications, informatics, upgrading the quality of goods, commodity diversification, supporting indigenous entrepreneurship and encouraging domestic savings."

Development policies must be determined by African countries themselves, the NGOs insisted. "The international community should support made-in-Africa approaches to economic development," Ms. Biyong told the plenary, expressing the view of most NGOs that prevailing structural adjustment programmes tend to reflect donor interests and priorities.

Mr. Hassan Sunmonu, General Secretary of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), was highly critical of the conditions usually attached to structural adjustment lending. Massive currency devaluation and the elimination of subsidies harm workers and other sectors

The emerging role of NGOs

Africa and its international partners are increasingly recognizing the role of NGOs in the development process. While total official development assistance is declining, bilateral and multilateral institutions are increasingly channeling a growing portion through NGOs. According to *The Reality of Aid, 1996*, an independent review of international aid, NGOs contributed more than \$7 bn to developing countries in grants in 1994, equivalent to 12 per cent of aid.

A special NGO report submitted to the Mid-term Review, *The Emerging Role of NGOs in African Sustainable Development*, provides 24 case studies of African and international NGOs that are actively advancing the goals of the New Agenda. Displaying flexibility, innovation, and the capacity to work with only very limited resources, they address a broad range of local community concerns, from short-term emergency needs to longer-term social development and the expansion of economic opportunities. A number of these NGOs have been especially energetic in promoting women's empowerment, providing credit and training to the poor, and championing sustainable agricultural practices. Their approaches tend to be more participatory than state strategies, actively involving local communities in the identification and resolution of development problems. (Copies of the report can be obtained from the UN Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries, Tel: (212) 963-5006/4780).

by sharply raising prices, he said. Jobs are lost through drastic reductions in public sector employment rolls, while excessively high bank interest rates "kill indigenous entrepreneurship." Privatization programmes, which initially focused on loss-making parastatals, are now being extended across-the-board, even to the most profitable state enterprises. "Privatization," he said, "has been lifted to the level of a religion."

Mr. Sunmonu clarified that African trade unions are not opposed to economic adjustment as such, but want to ensure that Africa's own priorities are taken into account when reform programmes are negotiated. "Don't shave our heads in our absence," he insisted. "Let us decide how to cut our own hair, what style to have."

Mobilizing local resources

In an era of scarce government and external financing, African NGOs and community organizations have an especially important role to play in helping to better mobilize local resources, a number of participants pointed out. In Tunisia, according to Mr. Adel Azzabi, the Association du Comité des Habitants d'El Mourourj II was able to organize residents of a poor neighbourhood in Tunis to finance and build their own housing. In Tanzania, said Mr. John Rutayuga of the Ukimwi Orphans Assistance, village communities are tapping the expertise of traditional healers in response to the limitations of the formal health-care system.

Ms. Lucia Quachey, of the Ghana Association of Women Entrepreneurs, noted that her organization formulated a project to encourage women merchants and manufacturers to trade more extensively with neighbouring countries. Donors initially showed little interest in backing the \$850,000 project, but after the association began raising the bulk of the funds locally through membership contributions and other mechanisms, donors eventually agreed to provide a quarter of the total required funding. "If you want people to have confidence in you," Ms. Quachey concluded, "you must do things yourself, no matter how small."

Such reliance on local efforts was also at the heart of the NGOs' proposed solution to continuing food insecurity. They called for strategies to promote sustainable food production, strengthen agricultural research, support women farmers, improve food distribution and access, and back regional food security mechanisms, such as those of the Southern African Development Community. While external food aid sometimes may be necessary, relief agen-

'Decisive action' needed on debt

Not nearly enough has been done to resolve Africa's debilitating debt burden, NGO representatives told the Mid-term Review of UN-NADAF. Debt relief initiatives so far have been too limited and piece-meal and have been offered to too few countries, they argued, calling instead for "immediate and decisive action" through comprehensive measures capable of resolving the debt problem once and for all.

Concretely, the NGOs endorsed the June 1996 position of the Group of Seven (G-7) industrial powers urging the Paris Club of official bilateral creditors to provide up to 90 per cent reduction in the net present value of debt of severely indebted countries. They also called on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to take immediate action on multilateral debt. For the poorest African countries to reach an "acceptable level" of debt by the year 2000, the NGOs suggested, debt servicing should be reduced to a maximum of 20 per cent of export earnings and/or 10 per cent of government budgets.

So far, the international community has not exhibited sufficient "political will" to definitively resolve Africa's debt crisis, said Mr. Opa Kapijimpanga, a representative of the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD). Because of this, he told *Africa Recovery*, there is a need "for the participation of civil society organizations in the negotiating process," which until now has been limited to governments and international institutions.

Launched in 1994, AFRODAD is a network of African NGO activists concerned with debt issues. Focusing on severely indebted countries, it has helped establish coalitions of church groups, trade unions, NGOs and the private sector in Zambia, Tan-

zania and Uganda, and is currently working to set up similar coalitions in Kenya and Mozambique. AFRODAD seeks to strengthen these coalitions at the national level, and supports them with research, documentation and analysis of the debt situation in their respective countries.

Major write-offs are needed for the most severely indebted countries to have any chance of exiting from the debt crisis, Mr. Kapijimpanga said. In addition, existing eligibility criteria need to be altered so that more African countries and a larger share of their debts are covered. Specifically, he said that scheduled debt servicing, rather than actual debt servicing, should

be used for classifying countries as "severely indebted" (thus making them eligible for debt stock reduction). In addition, strict adherence to IMF conditionalities should be dropped as a criterion for debt stock reduction, while the Paris Club should be "flexible" on the cut-off date for eligible debt.

To iron out these and other issues, an international conference on African debt should be held, the NGOs urged. Mr. Kapijimpanga explained that such a conference should be the culmination of prior meetings by the Paris Club, multilateral institutions and especially African countries. The latter meeting should be organized by the Organization of African Unity, supported by the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and should feature extensive NGO and civil society participation. While creditor countries and institutions have their broader coordinating bodies, Mr. Kapijimpanga noted, so far African countries have been involved in debt negotiations only on a "case-by-case, one-by-one basis. We don't believe that is in conformity with the principle of democracy, the principle of participation."



Mr. Opa Kapijimpanga

Photo: Africa Focus

cies should be careful not to undercut farmers' production efforts by indiscriminately dumping food, the NGOs insisted. They urged relief agencies to purchase their food aid from surplus areas within Africa as much as possible, so as to strengthen local agricultural markets.

The NGOs also stressed the importance of reinforcing Africa's own regional institutions, such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), African Development Bank and UN Economic Commission for Africa. In particular, they urged the international community to support "made-in-Africa models for conflict reso-

lution," such as the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. At the same time, they insisted, citing a statement issued in Harare in August by nearly two dozen groups belonging to the African NGO Networks Caucus, these African institutions must consult and work with African NGOs and civic organizations more extensively and systematically than they have so far.

If the NGO position at the Mid-term Review could be summarized in just a few words, said the NGOs' closing statement, it would be: "Trust the people." ■

Report on UN-NADAF

from page 1

concrete steps to help African countries adjust to the new global market environment.

The Secretary-General notes that financial flows to Africa over the first half of the New Agenda "stagnated at a level below what was expected," with net flows of official development assistance (ODA) to Africa declining from \$25 bn in 1992 to \$23 bn in 1994. "At this critical point," the report says, the international community should "accelerate its support" to Africa in order to "sustain the momentum leading to recovery and sustainable development."

According to the Secretary-General, African countries, for their part, must demonstrate a greater commitment to the goal of achieving sustained and sustainable growth and development by allocating adequate resources for this purpose. Africa must boost its aggregate savings rate to channel resources towards capital investment, and open its productive and financial sectors to the world. In addition, greater investment inflows, diversification of export products and expanded access to external markets are urgently required.

Slow but steady progress since 1991

Reviewing the efforts made by African countries and the international community to implement the New Agenda, the Secretary-General finds that most African countries have taken action to promote growth and development. These actions include a range of political and economic reforms, which have resulted in the following signs of "tangible progress":

- A significant improvement in overall economic performance, with the number of countries achieving the target 6 per cent annual GDP growth rate increasing from three in 1992 to 12 in 1995 (see box). The number of countries with negative growth rates dropped from 19 in 1993 to four in 1995.
- A growing commitment to sub-regional and regional economic cooperation and integration consistent with the 1991 Abuja Treaty for the establishment of the African Economic Community.
- Marked progress in democratization and constitutional reform, with a dramatic

A dozen countries hit 6 per cent growth target

The following countries posted 6 per cent or more gross domestic product growth in 1995:

- Angola • Benin • Côte d'Ivoire
- Central African Republic
- Equatorial Guinea • Eritrea
- Guinea-Bissau • Lesotho
- Morocco • Togo • Tunisia
- Uganda

African countries need to acknowledge that "Africa's future is in their hands," according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.



growth in the holding of multi-party elections and expansion in the number and impact of civic organizations. The role of non-governmental organizations in national development programmes has also grown.

- Recognition of the key role of the domestic and foreign private sector in economic development, with expanding efforts to promote private entrepreneurship and an improved business climate.
- Reforms aimed at boosting the development of the agricultural sector and improving access to food by the poorest groups. Many countries have also formulated environmental action plans and fostered community participation in efforts to control desertification, as well as adopting new population policies.

After noting "an unprecedented change in the landscape" of Africa's "political economy," the Secretary-General's report focuses on recommendations both for Africa and the international community for enhancing the New Agenda's implementation over the remainder of the decade. The pressing issues

for Africa, according to the Secretary-General, include: governance, democratization and peace; human development and capacity-building; mobilization of domestic resources and foreign direct investment; trade and commodity diversification; and industrial development.

By adopting the Cairo Agenda for Action in March 1995, Africa's leaders declared that good governance is essential to Africa's socio-economic development. Peace and stability are also prerequisites. While considerable strides have

been made since the beginning of the decade, the Secretary-General recommends further steps to consolidate the democratization process in Africa, improve governance and prevent or resolve conflict.

These include the creation of a institutional framework that provides for wider popular participation in the decision-making process, the emergence of a strong and vibrant civil society, dialogue with all groups within society and adherence to the rule of law. There should also be provisions for the independence of the media and an objective judicial system, as well as an efficient civil service and a strong partnership between government and the private sector. Lastly, mechanisms for promoting peace, political stability and security should be instituted.

Expanding human capacities

The Secretary-General's report states that a major challenge for the remainder of the 1990s is to develop Africa's human resources in order to better match capacities with the needs of the development process. It recommends that efforts be focused on the following priority areas:

- Expanding health care systems to ensure more equity, efficiency and reach.
- Integrating comprehensive population policies and programmes into development strategies.
- Intensifying efforts towards achieving universal primary education and literacy. Constraints to enrolment must be removed and curricula adapted to the continent's development needs, with private sector involvement.
- Addressing the problems of unemployment and underemployment. The private sector can play a role in technological development in vital sectors of African economies, including agriculture. The informal sector needs to

be strengthened.

- Empowering women to participate fully in the development process. Efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action should be accelerated.

Mobilizing resources for development

The Secretary-General's report recognizes that Africa requires massive amounts of resources to implement the New Agenda, most of which will have to be mobilized domestically. Among the measures proposed to do so are: raising public revenue by restructuring taxation and collection, controlling public expenditures, increasing private savings by appropriate interest rate policies, mobilizing community resources and savings, and boosting external trade. In particular, Africa needs to create competitive niches in the industrial and services sectors and increase the share of manufactured goods in its export mix.

The business climate also needs to be improved to attract domestic and foreign direct investment. This entails ensuring political stability, accountability and transparency; sustaining macro-economic stability by appropriate fiscal, monetary and financial policies; curtailing military expenditures; and nurturing entrepreneurship. Particular attention should be paid to developing telecommunications as a vital element of basic infrastructure.

Improvements in financial infrastructure are also needed, including facilitating increased capital transfers between private institutions through money markets and banks, as well as financial transactions and transfers among African countries. Financial intermediation institutions — banks, credit unions, cooperatives and other organizations which mobilize

small-scale savings — should be strengthened.

African economies must be diversified away from dependence on a limited number of primary commodities which are facing declining demand and prices on world markets, the Secretary-General's report recommends. Governments should place greater priority on diversification in their development policies and create an enabling environment by encouraging private sector initiatives in this area, improving infrastructure and strengthening human resources and technological capacity.

The report also calls for policies that accelerate industrial development. Efforts should be made to strengthen sub-regional and regional institutions in science, technology, engineering, and management, as well as to develop indigenous entrepreneurial capability with a focus on small and medium enterprises.

Based on the principle of "shared responsibility" between Africa and the international community, UN-NADAF calls for a "full partnership" in support of the continent's development efforts. The Secretary-General's mid-term report urges the international community to "reinforce its support" for Africa by increasing the "level, scope and modality of resource flows," by improving the external environment especially as it relates to the debt crisis, by supporting the diversification of commodities, and by enhancing market access for Africa's exports.

There is "a strong case" for increasing the volume and concessionality of development assistance to Africa, the report indicates, given the economic difficulties of many countries which make access to private funding impossible. There is also a need to improve the quality of international support to Africa's efforts in the 1990s.

Measures which should be considered, according to the Secretary-General, are:

- re-channeling aid to Africa's key development priorities, while taking into account capacity-building requirements so that technical assistance can be phased out over time;
- linking humanitarian and development assistance by allocating more resources to conflict prevention and reconstruction in post-conflict countries;
- switching to non-debt creating assistance.

In areas where donor investments predominate, such as agriculture, infrastructure development and health, the Secretary-General recommends better aid coordination. A broader sectoral approach, with the

objectives determined by the recipients, would further improve the impact of assistance. International aid should also be geared at consolidating national capacities for implementation and should involve a minimum of technical assistance.

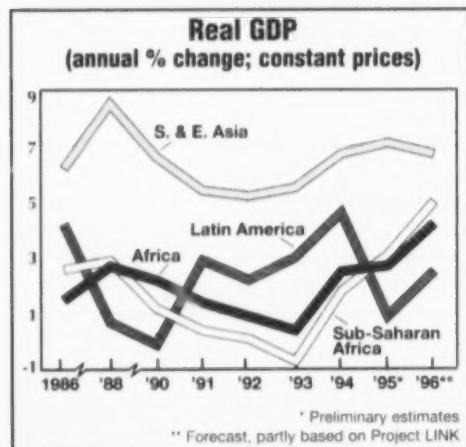
Africa's efforts to address conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict reconstruction need to be incorporated into a more comprehensive and coordinated approach with the support of other actors, including the UN and bilateral and multilateral donors. The OAU Mechanism for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts and its Peace Fund should be supported and early warning capacities should be strengthened.

Dealing with the debt crisis

Regarding Africa's debt crisis, the Secretary-General's report recommends the following initiatives:

- Official bilateral debt: the Paris Club should be encouraged to extend the Naples terms 67 per cent debt-stock reduction limit if the circumstances of individual countries justify it. It could also give up-front debt-stock reductions for countries with good track records of policy reform.
- Multilateral debt: the World Bank and IMF should be encouraged to implement recent proposals endorsed by the Bank-Fund Interim Committee.
- Commercial bank debt: banks should be encouraged to accept deeper discounts in buy-back operations and lower interest rates on par bonds, and to devise options to reduce up-front costs. Consideration should be given to providing additional resources for the World Bank's debt-reduction facility for International Development Association countries.

To offset any potential negative impact of the Uruguay Round on African countries, appropriate compensatory facilities, including further tariff reductions by developed countries on African exports and assistance with food imports, should be supported. The international community should implement General Assembly resolution 49/142 which recommends the improvement of existing compensatory mechanisms, and expansion of opportunities under the Common Fund for Commodities. The Secretary-General also urges donor countries to finance the preparatory phase of commodity diversification programmes in African countries. ■



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UN/DESIPA

Panel outlines Africa's top priorities

Debt resolution, governance and human resource development seen as key issues

Debt resolution, governance and human resource development are among the key issues that need to be addressed if Africa is to strengthen its socio-economic growth over the remainder of the decade, according to the Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development.

The Panel, established by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992 to advise and assist him in ensuring the effective implementation of the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), met at UN headquarters in New York on 12 September, the week before the start of Mid-term Review of UN-NADAF (see page 1).

The meeting, which was convened and chaired by the Secretary-General, also highlighted the importance of trade facilitation and resource mobilization, food security and agriculture, as well as more flexibility and coordination of development support to Africa. Mr. Boutros-Ghali opened the meeting by restating the UN's commitment to Africa's development and calling on the Panel to consider its advocacy role with regard to both enhancing Africa's image in the donor community and ensuring continued support. He also asked the Panel to discuss how African leaders could be best mobilized to address critical development issues, and to how the resources of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in developed countries could be harnessed in support of African development.

Fighting 'Africa fatigue'

Mr. Boutros-Ghali stressed the importance of reversing the generally negative perception of Africa, and what he termed "Africa fatigue," or indifference to the continent's future. Several Panel members, including Baroness Lynda Chalker, the United Kingdom's Minister for Overseas Development, said publicizing African "success stories" could boost Africa's image in the eyes of the international community.

In its final communique the Panel noted that success stories alone would not be enough, and identified those priority areas that would need to be addressed both by the Mid-term Review and in the future in order to boost the continent's development.

On debt, the Panel looked forward to a satisfactory outcome to current discussions on debt

relief and, most importantly, to quick implementation. It urged that eligibility and other criteria for debt relief be flexible enough to ensure that significant relief is provided to as many countries as possible.

Progress in democratization

Panel members noted the efforts in many countries in the area of democratization and human rights. But they also urged substantial support for strengthening capacities in the public and private sectors and civil society for efficient development management and governance.

Identifying human resource development as essential for Africa's economic recovery and development, the Panel said it should not be subject to selectivity or conditionality and should receive proper attention during implementation of structural adjustment pro-

grammes. Without a healthy and well-trained population, the continent will be unable to benefit from globalization, Panel members said.

Calling for more attention to be paid to the social sectors, they urged African countries to illustrate their commitment to human development by redirecting public spending, and called on donor countries to recommit themselves to increasing their support in this critical area.

Support for commodity diversification

Trade was another essential factor in Africa's economic growth development, the Panel said. To better integrate African countries into the global economy, the international community should support trade facilitation schemes involving commodity diversification programmes as well as efforts to develop supply capability and market access, the Panel said. It urged African countries to mobilize domestic resources and enhance savings for investment and faster economic growth. The Panel also emphasized the importance of an enabling environment for attracting the foreign direct investment that has so far eluded African countries.

Noting that some rigidities in the support provided for Africa's development efforts had, in several cases, contributed to a reversal of progress achieved, the Panel stressed the need for flexibility in applying pre-established performance benchmarks. It welcomed the trend towards improved coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions and said this should result in promoting more effective sectoral programmes which could receive financial support.

The Panel welcomed the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa and said the Mid-term Review should provide the opportunity to better articulate, and also strengthen, the links between UN-NADAF and the Special Initiative, which was designed to strengthen UN support for African development. Through a focused effort, Panel members said, the Initiative could encourage the spread of "best practices" and also improve the efficiency of development implementation. Emphasizing the importance of food security and agriculture, the Panel supported the objectives stated by UN-NADAF and the Special Initiative. The Panel decided to devote its next meeting to food security and agriculture, and to revisit the issue of governance. ■

Members of the Panel of High-Level Personalities on African Development

- **President Sir Ketumile Masire of Botswana**
- **Mr. Poul Nielson, Denmark's Minister for Development Cooperation**
- **Baroness Lynda Chalker, the UK's Minister for Overseas Development**
- **Ambassador Andrew Young, former US Permanent Representative to the UN**
- **Mr. Philippe Jurgensen, Director-General of the Société française de garantie des financements des petites et moyennes entreprises**
- **Dr. Mohammed Sadli, Adviser to the President of Indonesia for South-South and North-South Cooperation**
- **Dr. R. Barthelt, Director-General for sub-Saharan Africa in Germany's Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
- **Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity**
- **Ms. Graça Machel, Mozambique's former First Lady and current President of the Foundation for Community Development**
- **Ambassador Yasushi Kurokouchi of Japan, who chaired the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD)**
- **Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa**
- **Mr. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development**
- **Mr. Hazem El-Beblawi, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**

UN-NADAF Mid-term Review

Focus on key sectors



Overview

Five years after the UN General Assembly adopted the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), some tangible results have clearly been achieved. But despite the various efforts of African countries, donors and international organizations, those results have fallen far short of what was envisaged when the New Agenda was launched in 1991. Many problems have become more acute and most of Africa's potential is yet to be realized.

On the positive side, in 1995 a dozen African countries achieved UN-NADAF's target of 6 per cent annual growth in gross domestic product (GDP), while the number of countries with negative growth rates dropped from 19 in 1992 to four in 1995. Most countries also have implemented political and constitutional reform, and multi-party elections are now a regular occurrence across the continent.

In almost all countries, prices and trade have been liberalized, and about 35 countries have made monetary adjustments. Regional integration also is moving forward, with sub-regional groupings building the ties between countries that will help serve as the foundation for the African Economic Community.

However, Africa's economic and social woes continue. In the 1990s, Africa's GDP has accounted for less and less of world output (averaging about 2.04 per cent), although its share of world population rose to about 12 per cent in 1995. And while Africa's GDP growth was 2.3 per cent in 1995, its population grew by 2.9 per cent, leading to a 0.6 per cent fall in per capita income.

Africa still relies on a handful of primary commodities for its export earnings, and its share of world trade has steadily decreased, falling from 3.1 per cent in 1990 to 2.1 per cent in 1995. External indebtedness has swelled, reaching \$322.4 bn in 1995, while foreign direct investment has declined significantly. Widespread unemployment and public spending cuts, particularly in health, education and social welfare, continue and many countries lack sufficient resources to invest in human development.

UN-NADAF grew out of the General Assembly's 1991 final review of the UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD). This unique agreement to accelerate Africa's development process was the first such programme ever adopted by the UN and it created major expectations of better prospects for Africa. But as the final review noted, "economic and social conditions actually worsened during the five years (1986-90) of the UN-PAAERD period," even though 30 countries implemented structural adjustment programmes.

The New Agenda was adopted in December 1991 after three months of protracted negotiations. Ambassador Martin Hushid of Norway, who chaired the negotiating sessions, said "it was not a perfect document" and "was not so rich in concrete figures," but it firmly placed Africa on the UN agenda for all of the 1990s.

UN-NADAF stated that although Africa had the primary responsibility for its own development, the international community "shared responsibility" in achieving the continent's goals. The priority objectives of the New Agenda were "the accelerated transformation, integration, diversification and growth of the African economies, in order to strengthen them within the world economy, reduce their vulnerability to external shocks and enhance self-reliance."

In addition to an annual GDP growth rate of 6 per cent, UN-NADAF cited the Secretary-General's estimate of \$30 bn as the minimum net official development assistance (ODA) needed for Africa in 1992, a level that should increase by 4 per cent per year. It also reaffirmed the goal of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross national product to ODA.

To achieve UN-NADAF's objectives, both Africa and the international community made certain commitments. Africa's commitments included: promotion of regional economic cooperation and integration; promotion of investment; pursuit of policies to fully integrate rural economies in their national context, achieve food security and strengthen self-reliance; and environmental protection. The international community pledged to provide full support to Africa in such key areas as debt, increased resource flows, greater access to markets and economic diversification.

In his 1993 preliminary report on UN-NADAF, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted that in 1991-93, economic growth rates stagnated or turned negative, per capita incomes fell further, financial inflows were down sharply, the debt burden grew steadily and terms of trade worsened. Mr. Boutros-Ghali said later that "while Africa strives to put its own political and economic house in order, the international community must not remain idle or indifferent." In response, a General Assembly resolution called for "full and tangible" international support for UN-NADAF, reaffirmed Africa's need for deeper debt relief, and urged African countries to continue improving the investment climate.

The Secretary-General's mid-term report on UN-NADAF notes that one of the major challenges facing Africa is how to marshal the massive resources needed to promote recovery and development. African countries will have to enhance investor confidence and arrest and reverse capital flight. Export diversification and the penetration of new markets will be key to regaining and increasing Africa's share of world trade. Political stability, accountability and transparency are also critical for mobilizing resources.

The international community will in turn have to increase and re-channel aid to focus on Africa's well-articulated priorities and to supplement African efforts at preventing and resolving conflicts as well as reconstruction of post-conflict societies. Finally, further steps will have to be taken to alleviate the crushing debt burden, which the Secretary-General has described as a "millstone around the neck of Africa."

"The New Agenda for the Development of Africa is a new departure in international development cooperation. I am strongly committed to it. It must be made to yield results."

*UN Secretary-General
Boutros Boutros-Ghali*

Resource flows



Africa faces major problems in mobilizing resources for development even though most African countries have pushed through difficult policy changes since the 1980s. Continued low levels of domestic savings are insufficient to boost the pool of resources needed for both public and private investment. And despite commitments made by Africa's international partners in the framework of UN-NADAF, external resources also remain inadequate due to the continent's debt crisis, low and declining levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) and the decline in official development assistance (ODA).

UN-NADAF described the provision of adequate resource flows as a "critical element" of international support for Africa. To achieve sustained per capita growth, the Secretary-General estimated that a minimum of \$30 bn in net ODA was required in 1992, with real net ODA subsequently growing at an average 4 per cent a year.

Bearing these targets in mind, the international community undertook to "pursue its efforts to provide additional resource flows" which would complement Africa's own drive to mobilize domestic resources. International commitments included the effort to find durable solutions to Africa's debt crisis and to attain the target, which the UN adopted in 1970, of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross national product to ODA. Africa's development partners also promised to introduce measures and devise programmes to encourage foreign direct investment.

Africa's debt crisis

Africa's external debt is now widely acknowledged to be unsustainable, and the search for durable solutions has intensified. African debt increased from \$289 bn in 1991 to over \$314 bn in 1995. Sub-Saharan African debt has climbed from \$194.7 bn to \$223.2 bn over the same period, and from over 239 per cent to almost 270 per cent of export earnings. Although Africa's annual debt-service payments fell from \$30 bn in 1991 to \$22 bn in 1994, they leaped to \$33 bn in 1995. Reflecting this trend, Africa was using 31.3 per cent of its export earnings to service its debt in 1991. Although this ratio fell to 23.4 per cent in 1994, it rebounded last year to nearly 31 per cent. Sub-Saharan Africa's arrears on debt-service payments have nearly doubled from \$32.6 bn to \$62.2 bn in the 1991-94 period. As the UN Secretary-General has pointed out, debt service claims nearly one-fifth of Africa's savings and over 4 per cent of gross domestic product. Servicing multilateral debt in turn accounts for nearly half of total debt service. With Africa's low level of savings, such burdens are not considered sustainable.

Faced with this growing debt overhang, the emphasis with regard to bilateral debt has shifted from simply rescheduling debt service on more concessional terms to include efforts to cancel

more debt stock. The growth of multilateral debt has also become a prominent issue, prompting the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to announce a plan in early 1996 for deeper relief of both bilateral and, for the first time, multilateral debt.

To achieve sustained per capita growth, the Secretary-General estimated that a minimum of \$30 bn in net ODA was required in 1992, with real net ODA subsequently growing at an average 4 per cent a year.

Up until then, the major advance at the bilateral level had been the adoption of the "Naples terms" by the Paris Club of official bilateral creditors in late 1994. These terms permit up to 67 per cent reduction of export credit debt stock or debt service owed to Paris Club creditors. Due to the strict criteria for eligibility, only a handful of African countries have so far received Naples terms for debt service. With nearly half of African countries bearing unsustainable debt burdens, the Secretary-General said in 1995 that the impact of Naples would remain "limited unless it is applied to a sizeable part of outstanding debt and debt stock and extended to a larger number of countries."

Uganda's case has shown that Paris Club action under the Naples terms "is unlikely, on its own, to resolve the debt problems of countries with high proportions of multilateral debt," the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said recently. With multilateral debt comprising 77 per cent of Uganda's total debt, the 67 per cent reduction by the Paris Club of its eligible bilateral debt stock resulted in Uganda's total outstanding debt falling by just 4 per cent.

Responding to international pressure to find solutions to the growing problem of multilateral debt, the World Bank and IMF have targeted some 20 heavily indebted and poor countries, mainly African, as potential beneficiaries of a new plan. They have recommended that the Paris Club grant relief of up to 90 per cent of bilateral debt, and have asked major creditor countries to provide the bulk of funding for a trust fund to help certain countries pay off their multilateral debt.

Both developing and developed countries have raised objections to key aspects of the plan, ranging from the rigidity of the criteria for eligibility to the distribution of the financing burden. While the Group of Seven (G-7) leading industrialized nations gave their backing to the Bank/Fund plan in principle at their June 1996 summit, crucial aspects remain to be settled, not least the financial input to be made by the Bank, the Fund and by bilateral creditors. Some decisions are expected at the annual Bank/Fund meetings in late September.

Low investment flows

The importance of progress on debt has been repeatedly underscored since heavy indebtedness has been identified as a disincentive to foreign direct investment (FDI). The Secretary-General has urged investors "not to treat Africa as a whole as an inhospitable location for FDI and ignore potential opportunities." He

cited as evidence a UN inter-regional study of FDI profitability for foreign affiliates of US companies which showed that net income as a proportion of owner's equity was 24 per cent in African countries compared to an 11 per cent average for all developed countries. Although the OECD has noted "some sign of an incipient increase" in foreign direct investment, associated with policy changes in some countries and "the emergence of South African companies as investors in the continent," recent data do not confirm this view.

In spite of the political and economic reforms implemented in some 37 African countries, the continent is being bypassed by the boom in investment flows. For all developing countries, net FDI inflows have risen remarkably from \$22.6 bn in 1991 to \$60 bn in 1995. But the story has been very different for Africa, with net FDI increasing from \$1.8 bn in 1991 to \$2.9 bn in 1994, before falling back by 27 per cent in 1995 to \$2.1 bn. This confirms the continuing decline in Africa's share of total FDI to developing countries, which has fallen from 10 per cent in 1987-91 to 5 per cent in 1992-94, and to just 3.6 per cent in 1995.

Most African countries continue to improve their investment regimes and other parts of the regulatory framework in order to enhance the role of the private sector, both domestic and foreign, in economic growth and development. The Secretary-General has recommended further effort in this direction and has urged donor countries to help develop local infrastructure and build local capacity for investment promotion. However, the recent trends in development aid have not been very encouraging.

Concerns over development aid

In contrast to the Secretary-General's estimate, cited in UN-NADAF, that Africa would need an increase in ODA from \$25.2 bn in 1991 to \$30 bn in 1992, with a subsequent annual rise of 4 per cent, total net ODA actually fell by \$212 mn in 1992. It then plunged to \$21.5 bn in 1993 before recovering to \$23.5 bn in 1994.

The decline is mainly attributed to the near halving of ODA to North Africa from \$6.9 bn in 1991 to \$3.9 bn in 1994. Over the same period, sub-Saharan Africa's net ODA rose from \$17.7 bn to \$18.9 bn. But while multilateral disbursements have risen (from \$6.3 bn in 1991 to \$7.2 bn in 1994), there has been a steady fall in bilateral ODA to sub-Saharan Africa from the 21 members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD (from \$11.1 bn in 1991 to \$10.4 bn in 1994). The latter figure accounted for 32.7 per cent of total ODA to sub-Saharan Africa, the lowest proportion since 1991.

Sub-Saharan Africa's dependence on largely concessional ODA "remains almost total," the OECD noted. However, the overall trends for concessional aid are disturbing. In 1995, global ODA fell 9.3 per cent in real terms from a 1991 high of \$63.4 bn to \$57.2 bn in 1995, marking the fourth successive year of decline. Indeed, ODA as a proportion of gross national product (GNP) fell for 16 of the 21 DAC members, including all G-7 countries. This led to a decrease in the combined aid effort of DAC countries from 0.30 per cent of GNP in 1994 to 0.27 per cent in 1995, the lowest ratio since 1970.

According to the OECD's 1996 *Development Cooperation*

Report, diminishing ODA inflows can be explained either by donors reducing aid to more dynamic economies (such as Mauritius and Morocco) where both foreign and domestic private investment have risen, or by aid cuts to troubled countries such as Sudan and Zaire.

But IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus recently warned against the "dangerous slippage" in development aid and argued that many donor countries had been using the "fallacious alibi of budgetary savings" to make sometimes severe cuts in their ODA. He also cited US President Clinton's statement to the 1995 World Bank/IMF annual meetings that cuts to concessional aid programmes such as the International Development Association (IDA) were not required to balance the US budget.

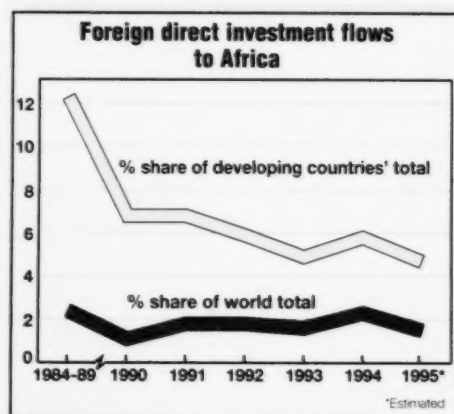
The US remains the single greatest influence on the overall declining trend of ODA, slipping from second to fourth among the 21 DAC countries in absolute dollar terms, and falling to last place in terms of its ratio of ODA to GNP. ODA from the US fell by 28 per cent in real terms, the largest decrease in absolute dollar amounts, while the 0.10 per cent ratio of ODA/GNP was its lowest since such accounting was introduced in 1950.

The Secretary-General points out that some countries, particularly Norway and Japan, "have fully adhered to the principle of additionality of aid resources to Africa as enunciated in UN-NADAF." Norway was the highest aid donor in terms of GNP in 1994, while France, the US, Germany and Japan ranked as the four biggest donors to Africa.

North Africa plays a significant role in Africa's overall aid receipts. In the 1989-94 period, the five North African countries received major shares of

total bilateral ODA to Africa from France (19 per cent), Germany (23 per cent) and Japan (25 per cent), as well as an overwhelming share of US bilateral aid to Africa (56 per cent). While the overall decline in aid flows from OECD countries was significant for Africa, also significant was the fall in aid from Arab countries, of which the North African countries received 87 per cent in 1989-94. Net disbursements from Arab multilateral agencies fell from \$25 mn in 1991 to -\$3 mn in 1994, while Arab bilateral aid also plunged from \$136 mn to \$13 mn in the same period.

The Secretary-General has said that the increasingly concessional terms for ODA to sub-Saharan Africa is one positive element in the decline in aid flows. He notes that ODA has grown faster for countries with IMF and World Bank-supported adjustment programmes, a trend which "may be considered in conformity with the donors' commitment under UN-NADAF to support Africa's reform efforts."



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UNCTAD, World Investment Report 1996

Commodities and trade



Higher prices for most major commodities in 1994-95 helped boost Africa's export earnings to an average \$99.1 bn per year between 1991-95, a 12 per cent increase over average receipts for the previous five years. At the same time, however, Africa's continued reliance on a handful of primary commodities for the bulk of its export earnings, together with growing competition from Asian and Latin American producers in a shrinking market for many raw materials, resulted in the region's share of world trade declining from 3.1 per cent in 1990 to 2.1 per cent in 1995. The cost of this precipitous fall in market share was nearly \$200 bn in potential export earnings — resources sorely needed for the continent's social and economic development.

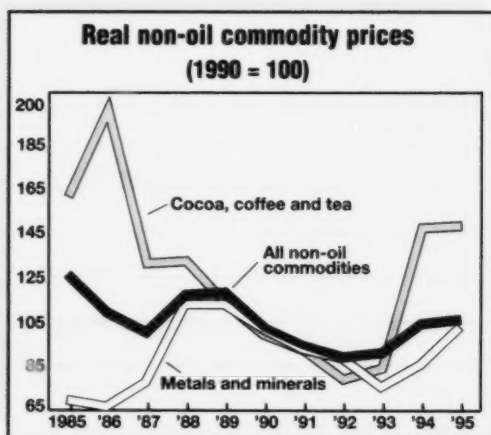
Although the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) made diversification of commodity exports and increased local processing a priority for the continent's economic development, most African countries continue to rely on the same commodities they did 30 years ago. Primary commodities accounted for approximately 75 per cent of Africa's total foreign exchange earnings over the first half of the decade, while some African countries relied on a single commodity for more than three-quarters of their total exports.

As overall export earnings for international trade soared between 1990-95, the share of primary commodities in global export volume dropped from 25.9 to 19 per cent. While

commodities prices has continued, there was a sharp upturn in 1994-95. Many African countries, however, were unable to take full advantage of the higher prices due to supply difficulties, structural constraints, political instability and the lack of adequate investment in the export sector. The depreciation of the US dollar in the first half of 1995 also lessened the real value of the increases for many countries, while exporters that had pre-sold their products derived little benefit from climbing prices.

Prices for most primary commodities had slackened by mid-1996 and it is projected that they will resume their long-term decline, partly due to decreasing demand, for the remainder of the decade. According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), average annual prices in 1984-94 were down, in real terms, for tropical beverages (by -10.4 per cent), agricultural raw materials (-1.3 per cent), vegetable oilseeds and oils (-4.8 per cent), and minerals, ores and metals (-1.5 per cent). Technological progress in the production of synthetics and other substitutes for primary commodities can be expected to further depress demand and prices.

Although Africa's exports grew by an average 5.4 per cent a year in volume terms in 1990-94, the annual unit value increase averaged less than 1 per cent. With import unit values up more than 5 per cent over the same period, the purchasing power of exports was severely eroded. Africa's terms of trade therefore suffered further deterioration, falling an average 2.2 per cent a year.



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UNCTAD, Monthly Commodity Price Bulletin and UN, Monthly Bulletin of Statistics

numerous developing countries have been able to reap profits from increasing levels of trade by diversifying production and trading partners, Africa, for the most part, has not. According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the region "has been bypassed by the conspicuous transformation in commodities traded globally."

Indeed, between 1990-95 the region's share in the trade of developing countries fell from 10.9 per cent to 6.4 per cent, while its share of total trade with the European Union (EU) — which accounts for 70 per cent of Africa's total trade — fell from 3.3 per cent in 1992 to 2.8 per cent in 1995.

Africa's average \$99.1 bn in export earnings principally came from the sale of raw commodities such as oil — exports of which grew in value by 11.9 per cent in 1995 and now account for 60 per cent of foreign exchange earnings — as well as agricultural goods, timber and minerals. Although the long-term trend of declining

Uruguay Round worries

Troubling many African commodities producers is how they will be affected by the coming into force of the Uruguay Round agreements. World trade is projected to increase by \$210 bn annually in the post-Uruguay trade environment, 30 per cent of which will be shared by developing countries. But it is unclear what percentage of these gains will accrue to African countries. Since Africa faces very low or zero tariffs for many exports, the general tariff liberalization called for by the Uruguay Round is bound to lower the value of Africa's preferences and could threaten some exports.

Studies estimate that Africa initially stands to lose up to \$3 bn a year due to Uruguay, mainly from hikes in import bills, budget deficits and the cost of lost preferences with the EU. The Secretary-General's report on UN-NADAF notes that although the consequences of the Round in the short term are detrimental, in the long run realistic exchange rates for African currencies and market-oriented policies would put it in a better position to penetrate export markets and take advantage of trade liberalization.

Trade between African countries accounted for less than 9 per cent of the region's total trade during the first half of the 1990s, one of the lowest levels of regional trade in the world. This poor performance is due, among other reasons, to the deficiencies of Africa's roads, ports, railways, waterways and telecommunications; lack of trade financing and poor trade information mechanisms; and trade-related bottlenecks such as non-tariff barriers and stringent rules of origin. One of the biggest obstacles to increased

regional trade has been the lack of diversification, which has resulted in many countries exporting the same or similar commodities.

Progress on economic integration

But there has been progress in economic integration, and this will have a positive impact on the development of regional markets that could provide export alternatives for local producers as well as enable African countries to negotiate more favorable terms with other international trading blocs. In 1993, the Abuja Treaty for the establishment of the African Economic Community came into force, and sub-regional groupings are moving ahead with plans to harmonize exchange systems and trade policies, remove trade barriers and set up common transport and communication systems.

Regional groupings such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the recently initiated Secretariat for East African Cooperation (EAC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in North Africa have either embarked on or are discussing cooperation in various trade-related sectors. In Southern Africa, the integration of South Africa into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1994 was seen as a move towards stronger sub-regional cooperation. SADC currently is seeking to eliminate trade barriers within the community and to develop a common currency by the end of the century.

According to the Secretary-General's report, industrial development will be central to the structural transformation of African economies. Countries now heavily dependent on the export of primary commodities will have to consider diversifying into more dynamic lines of activity, including the manufacturing and services sector. Vertical diversification, through increased processing, would provide more value-added to primary commodities. Horizontal diversification, through the production of a wider range of goods for domestic and external markets, including the development of new uses for traditional commodities, would help increase job opportunities and average incomes.

Diversification will require the development of the necessary economic infrastructure, better labour skills and access to financial resources. African countries will have to cooperate closely with financial and development institutions and will require increased levels of financial assistance in order to meet the challenges diversification will pose. Industrialized countries also will have to open up their markets to more processed goods from Africa, and find ways to give African exporters some relief from cascading tariffs (tariffs that rise according to the level of processing).

Promoting Africa's efforts in this regard is the Common Fund for Commodities, the sole intergovernmental organization exclusively concerned with commodity development issues and commodity development projects. The Common Fund has been active in backing a wide variety of diversification projects, in opening up new markets for existing commodities, and in promoting investment and technical assistance in these areas. While many of the projects that have been initiated through the Common Fund have been successful and show promise of sustainability, further financial resources are sorely needed to support them. In addition to

diversification, Africa also must face up to the challenges of the uncontrolled movement of primary commodity prices, which has led to severe instability in foreign exchange earnings and in balance of payment positions.

Past international commodity agreements, hurt by large fluctuations in the value of the US dollar and the setting of unrealistic price ranges and buffer stocks, have been largely ineffective.

According to the ECA, commodity producers are likely to benefit from some current agreements to cut production in order to stabilize prices. The members of the International Coffee and Cocoa Organization, for example, have decided to abandon the buffer stock in favour of export retention schemes, and to keep production levels down until at least the 1998-99 crop. Such cooperation in managing the supply of primary products is crucial to stabilizing prices, especially for commodities of which Africa commands a major share on the world market.

Africa will also have to focus on lessening its dependence on the European market and on developing markets in newly industrialized countries, particularly those of East Asia. The demand for primary products is still growing in this region, and its proximity to many African countries should give Africa an advantage over Latin American exporters.

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A plan of action for commodities

The African Plan of Action for Commodities, adopted in February 1996 by African ministers responsible for regional cooperation, integration and tourism meeting in Addis Ababa, addresses many of the above issues. Among the numerous measures that the Plan of Action urges African countries to take in order to ensure a wider export base and intensify regional cooperation are:

- developing export promotion programmes that support enhanced competitiveness at both the product processing and export diversification stages;
- reviewing possibilities for diversifying exports to other developing regions in order to take advantage of South-South opportunities and help diversify African markets;
- shifting industrial strategies for import substitution to an indigenous model based on the commodities sector;
- preparing programmes between and among countries for promoting commodity exports at the regional level.

Although African countries can do much on their own to meet the challenges of diversifying and expanding trade, the international community must also fulfill its own obligations. The 49th General Assembly adopted a resolution recommending the improvement of existing compensatory mechanisms for African trade losses and the expansion of the Common Fund for Commodities.

The resolution also calls on member states to make an initial special contribution to the diversification fund proposed when UN-NADAF was adopted. The fund would finance the preparatory phases of commodity diversification projects and programmes in African countries. The international community should take steps to implement this resolution, the report states, since Africa views the establishment of a diversification facility as a litmus test of international commitment to implement the New Agenda. ■

Agriculture



Agricultural and rural development, and especially the achievement of food security, are among the main priorities of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). With 60 per cent of Africa's economically active population employed in agriculture, and with the continent's cereal deficit projected to nearly double from 27 mn to 50 mn tonnes over the next 15 years, the New Agenda has emphasized Africa's commitment to further improving agricultural policies. These improvements would aim to enhance productivity; establish reliable marketing networks, credit systems and adequate storage facilities; and ensure the provision of necessary inputs to food producers — especially to women farmers, who account for the bulk of Africa's food production and processing.

There have been significant improvements in agricultural policies in many African countries. But overall, production on the continent has risen only moderately, lagging behind population growth and thus reflecting greater food insecurity.

- Over the 1990-95 period, agricultural production in Africa grew annually by an average of 1.5 per cent. This was a significant slowdown from the growth rates in 1985-89, which averaged 3.5 per cent annually.
- Total annual cereal production in Africa averaged 87.3 mn tonnes in 1990-94, a 9.7 per cent increase over the 1985-89 average. Most of this increase, however, was accounted for by North African countries, with sub-Saharan Africa's cereal production only 4.3 per cent higher in the 1990s.
- While agricultural production has kept pace with population growth in North Africa, per capita food production in sub-Saharan Africa has actually fallen, the only major developing region to register such a decline. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) index of per capita food production

in sub-Saharan Africa, which stood at 100 for 1979-81, had declined to 95.4 by 1990 and to 84.3 by 1994.

- On average, food intake per person is just 87 per cent of daily requirements in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1996, it is estimated that some 217 million people in Africa are chronically undernourished, the vast bulk of them in 17 low-income

food-deficit countries. Based on current food production and population growth trends, the number of undernourished Africans is projected to rise to some 300 million by the year 2010.

The slow progress in increasing food output in Africa is due in large part to agriculture's continued vulnerability to poor weather, to low levels of labour and land productivity, and to the numerous wars and civil conflicts that have disrupted farming and caused huge refugee movements. Food production is highly unstable, varying more than 10 per cent annually in 30 African countries, and more than 20 per cent in 14 others. Consequently, food aid to Africa has stayed high, averaging some 5.5 mn tonnes a year over 1990-93. Africa's cereal imports reached 34 mn tonnes in 1993/94, compared to 23.4 mn tonnes in 1980/81.

Shift in strategies

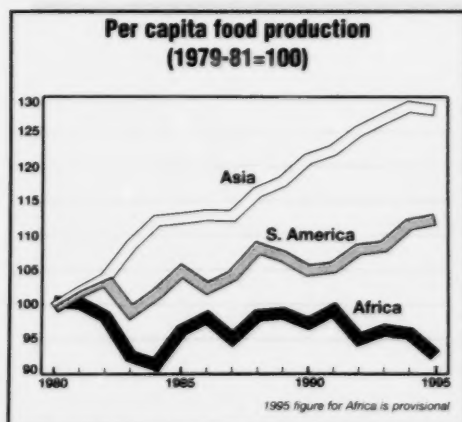
On the positive side, there has been a marked change in the overall approach to agriculture, especially in comparison with earlier decades

when farmers received few incentives to produce. More governments have come to appreciate agriculture's importance in their economies: as a source of raw materials for agro-industry, to feed rapidly growing urban populations, to earn foreign exchange from exports and to provide livelihoods for the 60 per cent of economically active Africans who are involved in agriculture.

Wholesale and retail prices of agricultural commodities have been deregulated in many African countries, leading to improved producer prices for numerous food and export crops. Many government marketing monopolies have been abolished, giving greater scope to the private sector. Agricultural extension services are being consolidated into more efficient national systems, with special efforts to recruit women extension agents and develop services especially designed to assist women farmers.

Systems for supplying agricultural inputs are being overhauled, although fertilizer, improved seeds and other key inputs often remain too expensive for many small-scale farmers. To improve farmers' access to financing, rural credit institutions are being expanded and strengthened in many countries, while farmer-managed savings and credit cooperatives are growing. By the end of 1994 there were over 5,000 registered local credit unions throughout Africa, operating in over 30 countries, with more than 5.5 million members altogether.

New food security strategies and projects have been launched in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya and Madagascar, among other countries, involving food-for-work and the provision of better seeds, livestock care, credit and physical infrastructure. The Mali-Sud project has successfully stimulated food crops, alongside cotton, in regions of Mali that previously had to import food. West Africa, overall, has shown remarkable improvements in



Source: UN Africa Recovery from FAO, Quarterly Bulletin of Statistics, 1995

food security, with the index of food production per capita (1979-81=100) reaching 130.2 for the sub-region in 1995. North Africa (including Sudan) came next, at 116.6, with Central Africa at 80.1, Southern Africa at 67.3 and East Africa at 53.5.

Food security and increased attention to rural infrastructure and farming inputs are becoming more central elements in African countries' agricultural development programmes. During the mid-to-late 1980s, however, agricultural reform was determined largely by the macroeconomic priorities of the structural adjustment programmes supported by the

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These brought a heavy reliance on price incentives and a sharp reduction in state intervention. While some farmers were able to take advantage of the new incentives, production overall did not grow as much as had been anticipated because many farmers suffered from serious constraints: lack of resources to cultivate more land, no credit to finance purchases of higher-priced seeds and fertilizers, poor roads and marketing facilities, and the disappearance of essential state services. More recent approaches to agricultural reform emphasize reducing such constraints, so that farmers are able to respond to market signals. This includes investing in rural infrastructure, alleviating poverty, improving education and health and addressing environmental and natural resource degradation.

Ensuring input supply

There is also greater recognition of the need to make essential inputs more available and affordable, in order to raise Africa's low levels of agricultural productivity. For the period 1993-95, cereal yields in sub-Saharan Africa were only about 41 per cent of those in Asia and 44 per cent of those in Latin America. However, research trials have found that much higher yields are possible in Africa even with existing seed and crop varieties, indicating that the main reasons for Africa's productivity gap include insufficient fertilizer use and irrigation.

As of 1993, fertilizer use in sub-Saharan Africa averaged only around 11 kilogrammes per hectare. With North Africa included, the continental average still reached only 21 kg/ha, compared

While agricultural production has kept pace with population growth in North Africa, per capita food production in sub-Saharan Africa has fallen.



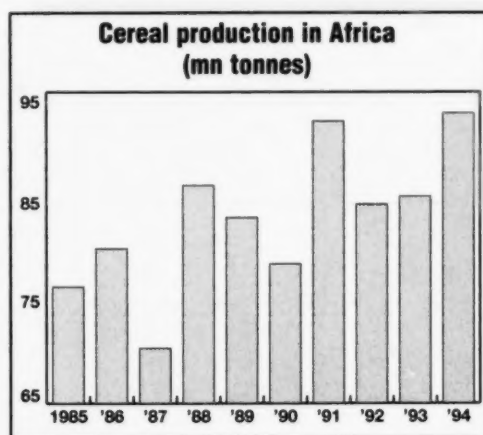
UNICEF/Magnum Photos Ltd

with 67 kg/ha in Latin America and 129 kg/ha in Asia. There is also considerable scope to expand irrigation, thus making farming in Africa less dependent on uncertain rainfall. In 1993, irrigated land as a percentage of total cultivated area was estimated at 5 per cent for sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 14 per cent in Latin America and 37 per cent in Asia. Not all cultivable land is suitable for irrigation, but it is estimated that some 42 mn hectares in Africa have the potential to be irrigated, of which only 13.8 mn currently are.

Expanding markets for farmers' produce is also considered vital for encouraging greater production. Most national markets in Africa are small, however, while the world market prices for many of Africa's key agricultural exports have been on a downward trend over the past decade, despite a surge in commodity prices in 1994 and 1995. One solution is to strengthen regional markets within Africa. Following the signing of a treaty in Abuja in 1991 to establish an African Economic Community, the Organization of African Unity and the FAO have been working with African governments to develop a Common African Agricultural Programme (CAAP) aimed at integrating African food and agricultural markets. The Southern African Development Community already had such a sub-regional agricultural strategy, while the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa is developing a sub-programme of the CAAP.

More international relief organizations have become aware of the need to ensure that sudden and large-scale deliveries of external food aid do not inadvertently depress producer prices for local farmers. The UN World Food Programme has adopted

a policy of purchasing its food aid whenever possible from surplus areas within Africa itself, so as to strengthen farmers' markets and encourage increased production. ■



Source: UN Africa Recovery from FAO data

Country profiles

	Population		GNP per capita (\$)		GDP (\$bn)		GDP annual growth (%)		Total debt (\$bn)		Debt service as % of exports		Food production per capita (1979-81=100)		Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)		Life expectancy (years)		Adult literacy		Primary school enrolment (%; gross ^a)		Access to safe water (%)	
	1995 (million)	1991-95 annual growth rate (%)	1991	1995	1995	1991-95 (%)	1991	1995	1991	1995	1991	1995	1992	1995	1991	1995	1991	1995	% of adults	% of adult females	1990	1993	1991	1994
Algeria	28.6	2.2	2186	2001	57.2	0.4	28.6	29.9	68.4	55.3			124	125	50	54	65	67	41	55	96	99	71	79
Angola	11.1	3.1	1079	831	9.2	-2.2	8.8	10.6	5.8	2.5			79	69	170	170	46	46	29	43	93	91	36	32
Benin	5.2	1.9	408	441	2.3	3.5	1.3	1.6	6.3	8.2			117	113	89	85	47	47	19	31	66	59	54	50
Botswana	1.4	2.4	2806	2965	4.2	3.5	0.5	0.7	3.4	3.9			61	63	62	42	60	65	56	67	115	116	53	93
Burkina Faso	10.4	2.3	300	325	3.4	4.0	1.0	1.1	9.2	20.7			129	126	120	89	48	47	7	17	36	38	69	78
Burundi	6.3	2.3	219	228	1.4	3.2	1.0	1.1	31.5	25.2			89	81	108	106	49	50	19	32	69	69	38	70
Cameroon	13.3	2.3	1015	813	10.8	-2.2	6.3	7.3	20.5	16.5			75	76	66	69	54	56	44	57	101	101	22	50
Cape Verde	0.4	2.4	1069	1069	0.4	2.6	0.2	0.2	9.2	12.0			107	90	n.a.	n.a.	67	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	71	n.a.
CAR	3.4	2.1	499	463	1.6	0.6	0.9	0.9	8.2	12.4			93	100	106	103	50	49	41	51	64	69	12	18
Chad	6.4	2.3	242	237	1.5	1.8	0.6	0.8	4.4	8.3			103	92	125	119	47	47	29	43	57	65	n.a.	24
Comoros	0.7	3.0	450	423	0.3	1.7	0.2	0.2	5.1	5.1			82	81	n.a.	n.a.	55	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Congo	2.6	2.4	1261	1113	2.9	-0.1	4.7	5.3	23.4	51.5			91	76	83	82	54	51	59	69	n.a.	n.a.	38	38
Côte d'Ivoire	14.4	3.0	790	734	10.6	1.5	18.9	18.5	39.1	37.4			89	89	93	90	53	51	24	34	70	70	18	72
Djibouti	0.5	2.4	1048	961	0.5	0.7	0.2	0.2	4.6	2.2			n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	48	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	47	n.a.
Egypt	58.5	1.8	906	911	53.3	1.9	40.7	33.4	16.7	14.6			118	125	62	41	60	63	34	48	97	102	89	80
Eq. Guinea	0.4	2.1	464	425	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3	7.5	3.0			n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	47	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Ethiopia	58.0	2.5	116	101	5.9	-0.4	3.5	5.1	25.4	11.7			19	n.a.	125	117	46	47	21	31	38	22	19	25
Eritrea	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.			n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	117	n.a.	50	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Gabon	1.2	2.7	4870	4400	6.0	0.6	3.8	4.0	6.8	10.4			81	75	97	91	53	53	45	67	n.a.	n.a.	68	68
Gambia	1.0	2.1	361	360	0.3	2.0	0.4	0.4	16.5	19.0			90	69	n.a.	129	44	45	20	34	n.a.	69	77	48
Ghana	17.5	2.4	423	464	8.1	4.3	4.2	5.4	26.9	24.6			108	130	84	76	55	56	46	59	75	74	57	56
Guinea	6.7	2.5	486	515	3.5	3.7	2.6	3.1	16.0	16.3			96	107	138	131	44	44	18	32	34	42	32	55
Guinea-Bissau	1.1	1.8	265	272	0.3	2.3	0.7	0.8	47.4	12.7			105	112	143	137	43	43	37	50	59	60	25	63
Kenya	27.9	2.7	363	349	9.7	1.9	7.0	7.3	32.2	33.3			100	81	52	61	60	56	62	72	94	95	30	53
Lesotho	2.0	2.0	330	344	0.7	2.9	0.4	0.6	4.7	4.5			55	46	82	106	57	60	67	68	n.a.	106	48	52
Liberia	3.0	3.4	699	390	1.2	-8.0	2.0	3.0	n.a.	n.a.			63	53	131	144	54	55	18	34	34	40	55	46
Libya	5.4	2.8	6394	5609	30.3	0.2	4.3	4.8	8.4	10.4			96	54	72	64	62	63	54	69	n.a.	n.a.	94	97

	Population		GNP per capita (\$)	GDP (\$bn)	GDP annual growth 1991-95 (%)	Total debt (\$bn)		Debt service as % of exports	Food production per capita (1979-81=100)		Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)		Life expectancy (years)		Adult literacy		Primary school enrolment (%; gross ¹)		Access to safe water (%)			
	1995 (million)	1991-95 annual growth rate (%)				1991	1994		1991	1994	1992	1995	1991	1994	% of adults	% of adult females (3)	1990	1993	1991	1994		
Madagascar	14.2	2.7	237	229	3.2	2.0	3.7	4.1	34.3	7.6	82	80	113	100	55	56	73	81	92	79	22	29
Malawi	11.3	2.5	201	174	2.0	-0.4	1.7	2.0	27.9	17.5	56	60	144	140	48	46	37	63	67	66	56	47
Mali	10.8	2.6	254	260	2.7	2.3	2.5	2.9	4.9	27.3	91	89	108	119	45	46	17	25	23	26	38	37
Mauritania	2.3	2.3	511	530	1.2	3.1	2.3	2.3	16.7	23.3	79	87	120	114	47	51	24	36	51	63	66	66
Mauritius	1.1	0.8	2449	2887	3.3	4.2	1.0	1.4	9.4	6.9	114	103	22	19	70	70	75	80	103	n.a.	95	99
Morocco	28.3	1.9	1022	974	27.5	1.0	21.2	22.5	27.6	32.1	102	105	72	46	62	63	26	39	68	69	61	55
Mozambique	16.4	2.5	90	93	1.5	3.1	4.7	5.5	12.3	23.0	61	85	170	161	48	46	19	36	68	60	24	33
Namibia	1.7	2.5	1544	1449	2.4	1.3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	65	70	73	62	58	59	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	124	n.a.	57
Niger	9.1	2.7	318	281	2.6	0.2	1.7	1.6	47.5	26.0	77	78	127	191	46	46	5	12	28	29	n.a.	54
Nigeria	126.9	2.5	310	306	38.7	2.2	34.5	33.5	25.2	19.6	125	153	86	114	52	50	n.a.	n.a.	70	70	48	40
Rwanda	8.3	2.8	343	163	1.4	-11.4	0.8	1.0	17.5	11.8	78	63	112	80	50	47	44	55	69	77	64	66
Sao Tome	0.1	1.9	446	421	0.06	0.7	0.2	0.3	25.0	25.0	60	69	n.a.	n.a.	66	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Senegal	8.4	2.2	762	726	6.1	1.2	3.5	3.7	19.7	11.3	96	110	82	60	48	49	19	29	58	59	54	52
Seychelles	0.07	0.8	5028	5446	0.4	2.5	0.2	0.2	9.3	6.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	70	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	100	n.a.	n.a.
Sierra Leone	4.7	2.2	204	176	0.8	-0.8	1.3	1.4	9.1	100	79	76	146	164	42	39	14	27	53	48	42	34
Somalia	10.2	2.7	69	42	0.4	-7.1	2.4	2.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	77	125	125	46	47	14	25	15	12	37	37
South Africa	42.7	1.9	2717	2581	110.3	0.9	n.a.	16.6	n.a.	5.4	n.a.	65	n.a.	52	n.a.	63	79	80	n.a.	109	n.a.	70
Sudan	29.0	2.2	396	361	10.2	-0.2	16.0	17.0	4.0	0.2	83	121	102	74	51	53	23	41	50	52	21	60
Swaziland	0.9	2.2	1179	1198	1.0	2.5	0.3	0.2	3.5	2.5	76	80	n.a.	n.a.	57	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	53	n.a.	n.a.
Tanzania	30.7	2.7	99	92	2.8	1.2	6.5	7.4	24.1	20.4	74	77	112	106	54	52	50	63	64	68	56	50
Togo	4.1	2.6	418	363	1.5	-0.3	1.4	1.5	7.5	7.6	97	84	88	83	54	55	30	46	103	100	71	63
Tunisia	8.9	1.7	1670	1874	16.7	4.0	8.3	9.3	22.7	18.4	116	98	45	28	67	68	47	60	115	120	68	99
Uganda	20.4	2.4	213	234	4.8	4.3	2.8	3.5	63.8	44.2	91	102	110	111	52	45	44	57	70	71	20	34
Zaire	43.8	2.6	210	152	6.7	-3.8	10.7	12.3	7.5	4.5	92	85	117	120	53	52	61	72	78	n.a.	34	27
Zambia	9.4	2.3	469	432	4.0	0.6	7.3	6.6	40.6	31.2	71	79	112	114	54	49	55	74	95	97	59	50
Zimbabwe	11.5	2.4	694	638	7.4	0.7	3.4	4.4	27.6	26.9	43	53	61	57	60	54	77	83	125	119	n.a.	77

Source: All data ECA Secretariat except:

(1) FAO; ECA Secretariat 1993

(2) FAO; ECA Secretariat 1996

(3) ECA data on the basis of UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 1993 and UNDP, Human Development Report 1993

(4) ECA data on the basis of UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 1996 and UNDP, Human Development Report 1995

(5) 1990, last data available

*The gross enrolment ratio is the total number of children enrolled in a schooling level - whether or not they belong in that level's age group - as a percentage of all children in that age group.

Population



Africa's population growth rate remains the highest in the world, although there are signs that it may be declining very slightly. The continent's total population, estimated at 748 million in 1996, is expected to exceed 830 million by the end of the decade and to double to nearly 1.5 billion by the year 2025.

Such a rapidly growing population, noted the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), places tremendous strains on Africa's development process. Food production, employment, shelter and basic social services have had difficulty keeping up with the expansion. High rates of rural-to-urban migration compound the problems in Africa's fast-growing cities. In response, African governments are increasingly recognizing the importance of integrating population policies more closely in their overall development strategies. But the challenges remain enormous.

- Africa's annual population growth rate stood at 2.9 per cent in 1995, according to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and will likely average 2.7 per cent over 1995-2000. Even this projected lower rate will remain far above the rates for Latin America (1.7 per cent) or Asia (1.5 per cent).
- Based on figures of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, in only 17 African countries did average GDP growth rates exceed average population growth rates over 1991-95, while populations grew more rapidly than economic production in 35 countries.
- By 1995, some 34 per cent of Africans were living in cities and towns, compared to 27 per cent in 1980. UNFPA projects

A woman receives family planning counselling at a health clinic in Gambia.



modern contraceptives, compared to 49 per cent in Latin America and 54 per cent in Asia.

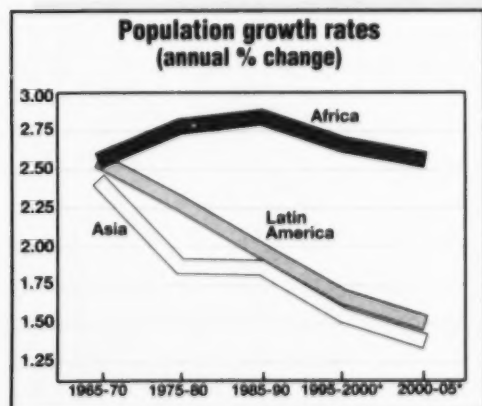
- African women face a 1-in-20 risk of dying during pregnancy or childbirth.

Faced with these daunting realities, there has been a turnaround in official approaches to issues of population in Africa. A decade ago, nearly two-thirds of African governments viewed their population growth rates as satisfactory, and only three countries had explicit national population policies. Currently more than two-thirds of African governments view with concern their population growth rates. As of 1995, 26 African countries had adopted specific population policies, while another dozen or so were in the process of doing so.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, Egypt, reflected a new international consensus: that population issues can be effectively tackled only by combatting poverty, involving local communities, improving maternal and child health and raising the socio-economic status of women.

In line with the ICPD's Programme of Action, almost all African countries are now integrating family planning counselling and services into their public health programmes. Among 41 sub-Saharan countries that responded to a recent survey, 29 reported significant progress in expanding their family planning service networks and 22 have reported increases in their contraceptive prevalence rates. Public education campaigns about the risks of HIV/AIDS have contributed to the increase. Improving women's and girls' education also is now viewed as a key component to progress on population issues, a point reinforced by the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995.

Analysts already foresee the beginning of a "demographic transition" in about 10 African countries, with lower infant mortality and fertility levels contributing to a significant slowing in their population growth rates.



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UN, World Population Prospects, The 1994 Revision, 1995



From well before the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, African countries have been emphasizing that issues of environmental protection and economic development must be addressed together. As the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) noted, "Africa is fully convinced that the problems of environment and development should be tackled in an integrated and balanced manner," a point reiterated in the African Common Position on Environment and Development submitted to the Rio summit. Among these problems:

- Drylands have been expanding through desertification and now cover nearly half of Africa, directly affecting some 300 million people.
- Eighty per cent of pasture and range areas are affected by soil degradation and erosion.
- By the year 2000, soil erosion will have reduced land productivity in Africa by 25 per cent from its 1975 level. In the Sahel region, where soil erosion and vegetation loss are especially severe, land degradation results in an estimated \$26 mn in economic losses annually.
- Africa loses 0.6 per cent, or more than 3.2 mn hectares, of its total natural forest land every year. Some 10-20 per cent of this loss is due to commercial logging, and the remainder to environmental causes, cutting of trees for fuelwood or clearing land for agriculture. Reforestation projects replace only about 5 per cent of annual losses.
- As of 1994, an estimated 54 per cent of Africa's population (or 380 million people) lacked safe drinking water, while 66 per cent (462 million) did not have access to sanitation. In the rural areas, the proportions stood at 63 per cent and 76 per cent, respectively.
- Based on current population growth rates, water availability per capita in Africa will fall to half of current levels within the next 25 years.

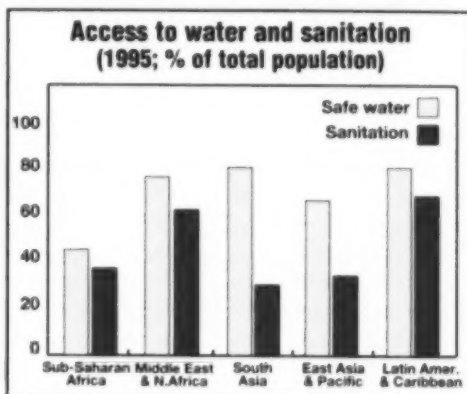
These realities have determined the specific actions that African countries have taken, as well as the priorities they have sought to advance within the various international negotiations on sustainable development issues. Among the priorities cited by the African Common Position were the attainment of food self-sufficiency and security, greater energy self-sufficiency, rational management of forests, the reversal of desertification, drought monitoring, efficient and equitable use of

water resources, management of bio-diversity and bio-technology, development of science and technology, and poverty eradication. And reflecting concern over the "export" of industrial pollution from developed countries to Africa, the Organization of African Unity adopted a convention in 1991 prohibiting the dumping or transporting of toxic and other hazardous wastes in Africa.

Desertification, one of the African continent's foremost concerns, hardly featured in the preparatory meetings leading up to the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio. But at the conference itself, African countries succeeded in winning agreement that a specific convention on desertification would be negotiated. Such a convention was signed in 1994, setting out an ambitious agenda to reverse land degradation in affected regions.

At the national level, 21 African countries so far have completed the preparation of National Environmental Action Plans

(NEAPs), and others have various programmes to manage and safeguard natural resources. As of 1994, there were 723 protected natural areas across the continent covering some 150 mn hectares of land, forests and wildlife habitats. Hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) devoted to sustainable development and environmental issues also have emerged on the continent in recent years. African governments and donor institutions are increasingly working with such NGOs and other community groups to combat environmental degradation by building terraces, planting village woodlots, fixing sand dunes, restoring soils and disseminating more sustainable farming methods. ■



Men install a village pump near the Malawian city of Nsanje: water availability per capita in Africa is expected to fall to half of current levels within the next 25 years.



UNICEF/Chris Anderson



Over the first half of the 1990s, Africa's political landscape has undergone a remarkable transformation, with the majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa exchanging authoritarian, one-party states and military regimes for relatively democratic, multiparty systems of government.

Whereas in the late 1980s, there were only a handful of democracies on the continent, by early 1995, 31 of the 42 sub-Saharan countries that did not already have multiparty systems held democratic presidential or parliamentary elections. Fourteen of those resulted in the defeat of an incumbent and a peaceful transition to democratic rule. In 1996 and 1997, close to half of African countries will hold elections at the national or local level.

Perhaps no group of countries has undergone as great a metamorphosis over the past five years as Southern Africa. Once riven by apartheid, civil war and destabilization, the sub-region is now at peace, governed by democratically elected leaders, with the potential to act as a growth pole for the entire continent. The successful transition to majority rule in Namibia in 1990 and in South Africa in 1994, elections in Mozambique and Angola after decades of war, and ballot box victories over entrenched one-party states in Zambia and Malawi have provided inspiration to countries in the region and beyond.

Concomitant with the burgeoning of democratic systems of government has come an explosive growth in the mass media. Once dominated by state-owned newspapers and government

broadcasting, most African countries are now home to a plethora of private newspapers and radio stations which have enabled an unprecedented public airing of political issues. In Malawi, for example, the number of newspapers grew from one in 1993 to more than 30 in the period before the 1994 election. Ghana has seen a fivefold expansion in its print media between 1990 and 1995, as has Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and many other countries.

Civil society

In addition, organs of civil society — from trade unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to human rights groups and political parties — have blossomed across the continent, becoming active participants, in some cases for the first time, in the political processes of their countries.

Despite the phenomenal growth in political pluralism, however, much work remains to be done to entrench the practice of democracy and improve on governance. Indeed, the experience of the past five years has shown that elections are a necessary, but insufficient condition for the establishment of a vibrant democracy.

In some cases, elections have served to legitimize incumbent rulers through a balloting process so manipulated as to render the results meaningless. And despite the expansion in the media and civil society, journalists in some countries continue to face censorship, fines, and prison terms, as do human rights activists and political opponents.

The UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) recognizes that democratization must be strengthened and the quality of governance improved in order to facilitate greater participation of the people in the development process. Beyond simply holding elections, an institutional framework must be created which guarantees the rule of law, a strong and participatory civil society, a free press, and an independent judiciary, as well as providing for a strong partnership between governments, the private sector and NGOs.

Peace Initiatives

Needless to say, none of this can be achieved in conditions of conflict. UN-NADAF therefore calls for the strengthening of peace initiatives by African countries so as to create the conditions for development and to facilitate the redirection of resources from military and security purposes to the continent's socio-economic advancement.

During the 1990s, regional initiatives such as the Organization of African Unity Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution have contributed to the peace process in Angola, Comoros, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mozambique, and to some extent in Burundi and Rwanda. The Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Group in Liberia also continues to work toward a peaceful solution in that country. And other initiatives are being launched by African NGOs focusing on issues of governance, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.



A Mozambican woman proudly shows her voting card outside a polling station near the capital, Maputo.

UNICEF / Felisberto Muchiva



In 1996, mid-way through the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, a child born in sub-Saharan Africa is more likely to be malnourished than to go to primary school and is as likely to die before the age of five as to enter secondary school. Behind these compelling facts lies the crux of the challenge facing Africa for the remainder of the decade: an urgent need to redouble efforts to develop the continent's human resources as key to both reduction of poverty and long-term growth.

Young girls at a primary school in Boubon, Niger: in sub-Saharan Africa, 50 per cent of school-age girls — a total of 36 million — are not attending school.



A vicious circle

Africa remains caught in a vicious circle: partly due to poor health, education and nutrition, rapid economic growth has been impossible, and without economic growth, resources to invest in human development have been insufficient. The damage wrought by decades of economic crisis is visible in today's deteriorating health and education infrastructures. It is also apparent in the cost to society of preventable deaths and loss in human potential, and in contributions to development foregone for lack of education and skills.

The picture that emerges is as follows:

- Only about one-half of school entrants in grade one in sub-Saharan Africa currently finish grade five, and at the primary and secondary levels more than 80 million boys and girls are not in school.
 - About 170 million people — a third of the sub-region's population — do not get enough to eat; about 23 million children are malnourished and 16 per cent of babies are under-weight.
 - There is only one doctor for every 18,000 people in the sub-region, compared to 1 for every 1,000 in Latin America, and 1 for every 390 in industrialized countries.
 - The sub-region has the world's highest maternal mortality rate, 980 per 100,000 live births, as compared to 266 in North Africa and 36 in Europe.
- To its credit, Africa has made measurable social progress in

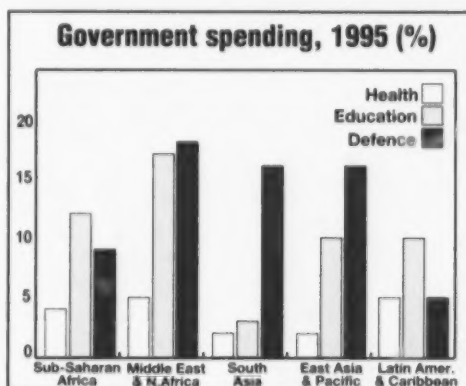
key areas: average life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa continues on an upward trend, from 40 in 1960, to 50 in 1987, and 52 in 1993. Adult literacy has more than doubled, from 27 per cent to 55 per cent over the last two decades. The infant mortality rate has fallen from 167 deaths per 1,000 live births three decades ago to 103 in 1987 and 93 today.

Some gains, some setbacks

The five countries of North Africa — Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and Egypt — have achieved "medium" human development according to the human development index devised by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), consistently scoring higher than their neighbours to the south in standard measures of education, health and social welfare.

But for every gain, there have been setbacks or stagnation. Of the 48 countries in the world which rank "low" in human development, 37 are in sub-Saharan Africa. At current slow rates of improvement, countries like Côte d'Ivoire, where

in the 1990s, primary enrolment continues to decline after growing steadily from the 1960s to 1979, may require 65 years to attain a level of human development to match industrial countries. Those even further behind, such as Mozambique and Niger, may take more than two centuries to catch up, according to UNDP.



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 1996

Africa's social sector has remained under great pressure in the 1990s primarily due to major cutbacks in public expenditure on education and health under the weight of economic instability and structural adjustment. Many governments have been prompted to introduce user fees for schooling or social services previously offered free of charge, with the result that the poor often go without health care and must sacrifice their children's education.

Problems of efficiency, equity and coverage abound. Public expenditure in the health sector rarely exceeds an average of 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), or \$10 per capita per year, and is more likely to be allocated to curative services in urban hospitals than to preventive and primary care.

In many countries, more than 50 per cent of the population has no access to modern health facilities. Another 54 per cent has no access to safe drinking water and 66 per cent lacks sanitation — services that could prevent the spread of some diseases. The impact of weak preventive health care is most severe on the continent's children, who continue to fall ill or die most often from preventable and/or treatable afflictions — acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea, malaria and measles — in addition to protein-energy and micronutrient malnutrition.

Most diarrhoeal diseases, for example, are treatable with inexpensive oral rehydration therapy (ORT). But while 16 countries have increased their ORT use rate by 30 percentage points or more over the last decade, recent data indicates that the ORT use rate in sub-Saharan Africa is about 57 per cent, compared to the use rate of 80 per cent by the year 2000 recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Pneumonia the biggest childhood killer

Outbreaks of diphtheria and measles, as well as pertussis, or whooping cough, continue to afflict the continent's children. The latter two illnesses can lead to acute respiratory infections, including pneumonia — the single largest childhood killer. But sub-Saharan Africa's immunization rates are below targets set by WHO for the mid-1990s, and significantly below the global

average, particularly in rural areas and in countries in serious economic crisis or civil strife.

There are, however, improvements: today, about half the children of the sub-region are immunized, compared with only 20 per cent in the early 1980s. Tunisia and Egypt have reached the goal of 90 per cent measles immunization

by the year 2000, and Benin, Guinea and Uganda have raised the level of measles immunization by more than 25 percentage points between 1988 and 1994.

Guinea worm, a parasitic infection, has been reduced by 95 per cent and could be totally eradicated before the end of the decade thanks to the efforts of a worldwide coalition including UNICEF,

WHO, and the US-based Carter Center. The World Bank and WHO are also working to eradicate onchocerciasis, or river blindness, from the remaining 16 African countries in which it is confined. These two campaigns demonstrate what can be achieved by targeted interventions — with the support of Africa's development partners — at a time when national budgets are not meeting even basic health needs.

The scourge of AIDS

Malaria remains a major cause of death and incapacitation in Africa. Yet its negative impact on development is being surpassed by that of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which causes AIDS. Over the past five years, progress has been made in introducing epidemiological

surveillance systems, in slowing HIV's spread in some communities by successful prevention campaigns, and in community-based responses to the epidemic. However, by killing men and women between the ages of 15 and 45, their most productive years, the disease is taking a devastating toll, from the level of the household to the national economy.

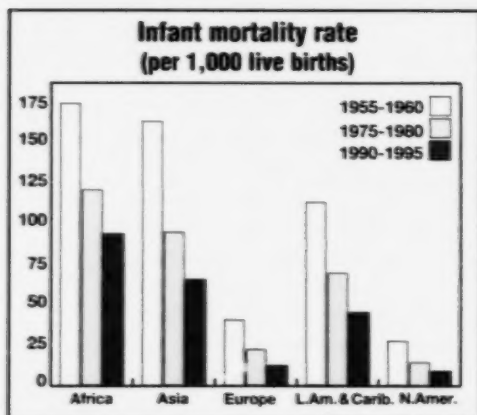
More than 13 million people are living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, two-thirds of the global total, and 50 per cent of the 7,500 new infections that occur daily worldwide are in the region. Particularly hard hit are Africa's women, who number close to 8 million out of the 10 million women worldwide living with HIV. They have transmitted the virus to as many as one million children, either in the womb, during childbirth or through breast-feeding.

In addition, African women risk serious illness and death from a host of complications from pregnancy and childbirth, many of which are connected to insufficient pre- and post-natal care and family planning services. In sub-Saharan Africa, where fertility rates average 6.4 — the highest of all regions — one in 13 women dies of maternal causes, compared to one in 3,300 in the US.

Many of Africa's health problems, which are exacerbated by emergencies such as drought, famine and armed conflict, are linked to inadequate access to primary and secondary education, among other factors. Since the 1990 Jomtien Conference on Education for All, most regions in the world have made progress in expanding educational opportunity — with the exception of Africa, where declining enrolment ratios evident during the crisis years of the 1980s have not been reversed.

Public expenditure on education in sub-Saharan Africa is not only the lowest in the world — \$28 per capita, compared with \$49 in other developing regions — but also disproportionately skewed in favour of higher education to the detriment of primary education and basic literacy. Gross enrolment ratios at the primary level

Africa has made measurable gains in such key areas as life expectancy, adult literacy and infant mortality. But for every gain, there have been setbacks or stagnation and the social sector remains under great pressure.



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 1996

are actually declining, a trend expected to continue at least until the year 2000. After having increased from 50 per cent in 1970 to 74 per cent in 1982, the ratio was 69 per cent in 1987 and fell further to 67 per cent in 1993. No other region has ever experienced such a setback, although the number of children in primary school has quadrupled since 1960.

Expanding numbers of school entrants, coupled with expenditure cutbacks, have caused a near collapse of educational infrastructure. This situation is compounded by high rates of attrition

and repetition, a loss of qualified teachers and declining standards. In many countries, there is practically no funding from the central government for primary education, except for teacher salaries and allowances.

A particular problem in sub-Saharan Africa is the fact that 50 per cent of school-age girls, a total of 36 million, are out of school, compared with an average 18.6 per cent in North Africa. Even when the same number of boys and girls enroll in first grade, 50 per cent of girls drop out by fourth grade. Sixty-four per cent leave school before they become fully literate. The primary school completion rate for girls is only 34 per cent, and only 10 per cent of girls, compared to 36 per cent of boys, attend secondary school in the sub-region. Four times as many boys as girls continue to the tertiary level.

This situation persists despite the widespread recognition of the catalytic effect on development of girls' education, which is closely linked to fewer maternal and child deaths, better child health and nutrition, later marriage age, higher rates of contraceptive use and reduced fertility, as well as to wider economic opportunities and improved agricultural production.

Non-formal education and literacy programmes have also not grown fast enough to make up for the shortfalls in the formal educational system. The number of illiterate adults in the sub-region continues to increase and is projected to reach 146.8 million by the year 2000.

An infant is weighed as part of a nutrition screening programme in Ethiopia: nearly 23 million children in sub-Saharan Africa are malnourished and 16 per cent of babies are underweight.



UNICEF / Mark Thomas

Challenges for the future

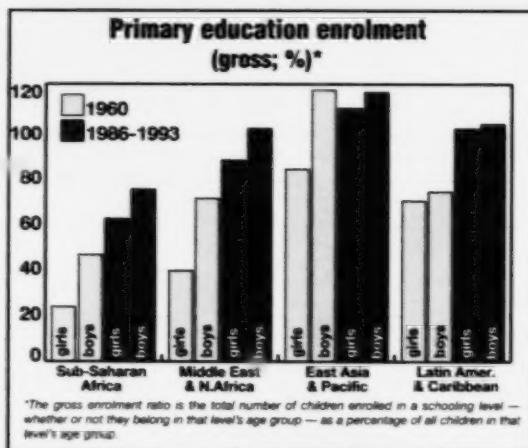
UN-NADAF will continue to emphasize improvements in basic health care and education among the key priorities for the remainder of the decade. This will require some reordering of budgetary allocations and shifts in policy orientation. At the 1995 World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen, the "20/20 Initiative" received some support. This was a call for developing countries to increase the proportion of their budgets allocated to human development from 13 to at least 20 per cent, and for industrialized countries to raise the proportion of their aid for the same purpose from 7 to 20 per cent.

African governments have begun taking steps of their own: some have introduced social safety nets, while others are waiving user fees for primary health and education services for the poor and for children under five.

In Ethiopia, Mali, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, efforts have been made to reduce military expenditures in order to reallocate resources to the social sectors. And since the 1990 World Summit for Children, 33 African countries have finalized national programmes of action for children, and a further 12 are in the draft or preparatory phase.

Building on the UN-NADAF framework, the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa plans to devote 85 per cent of an estimated \$25 bn in cumulative resources over the next decade on improvements in basic health and education. It will concentrate on reform of the health sector to

strengthen the capacity of health systems and communities to reduce the main causes of morbidity and mortality, including malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and childhood illnesses. It will also focus resources on increasing access to basic education, particularly for girls and women.



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 1996

Africa's economic performance

Real growth of gross domestic product, 1991-95 average

